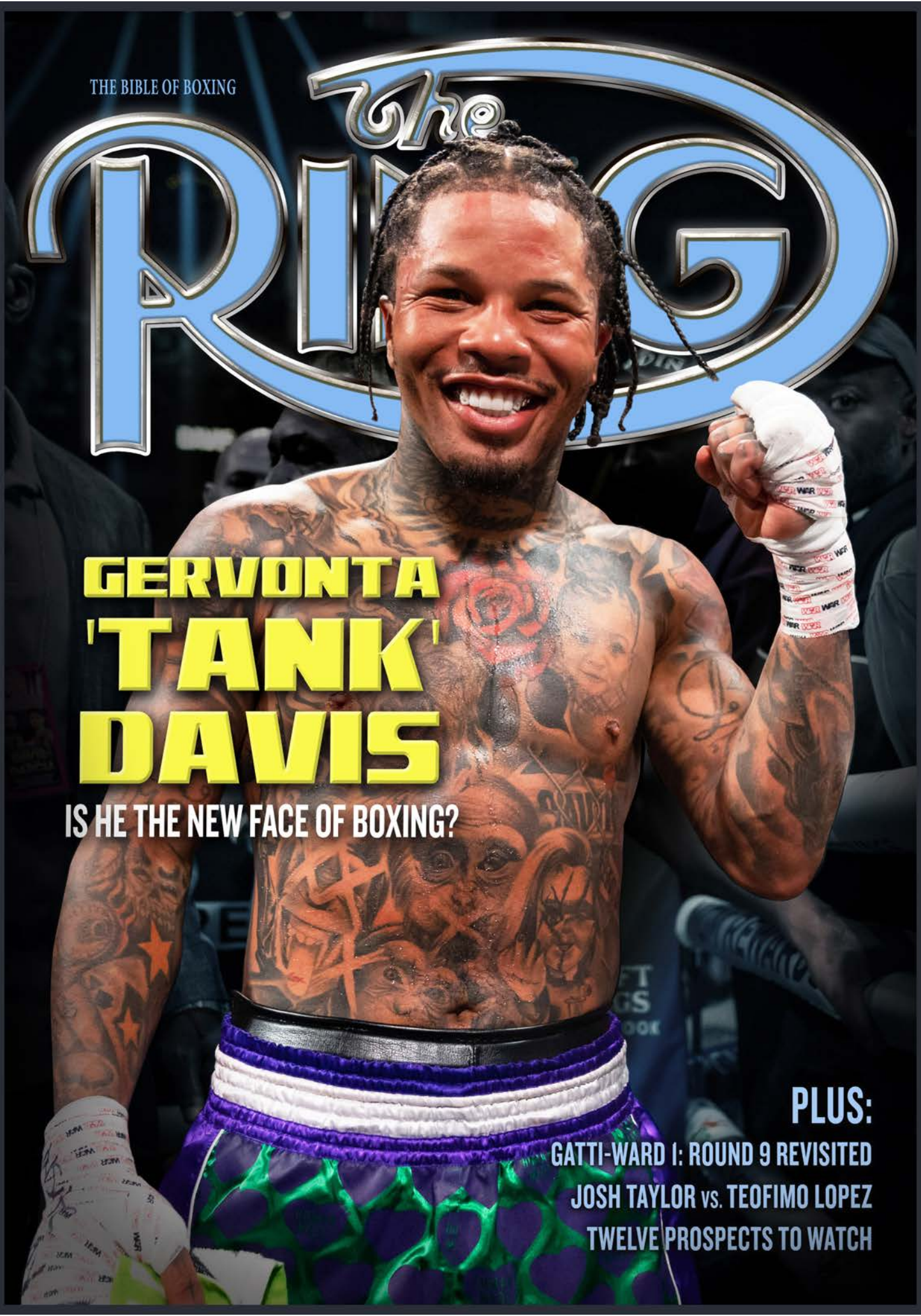
THE BIBLE OF BOXING
The RING
GERVONTA 'TANK' DAVIS
IS HE THE NEW FACE OF BOXING?
PLUS:
GATTI-WARD I: ROUND 9 REVISITED
JOSH TAYLOR vs. TEOFIMO LOPEZ
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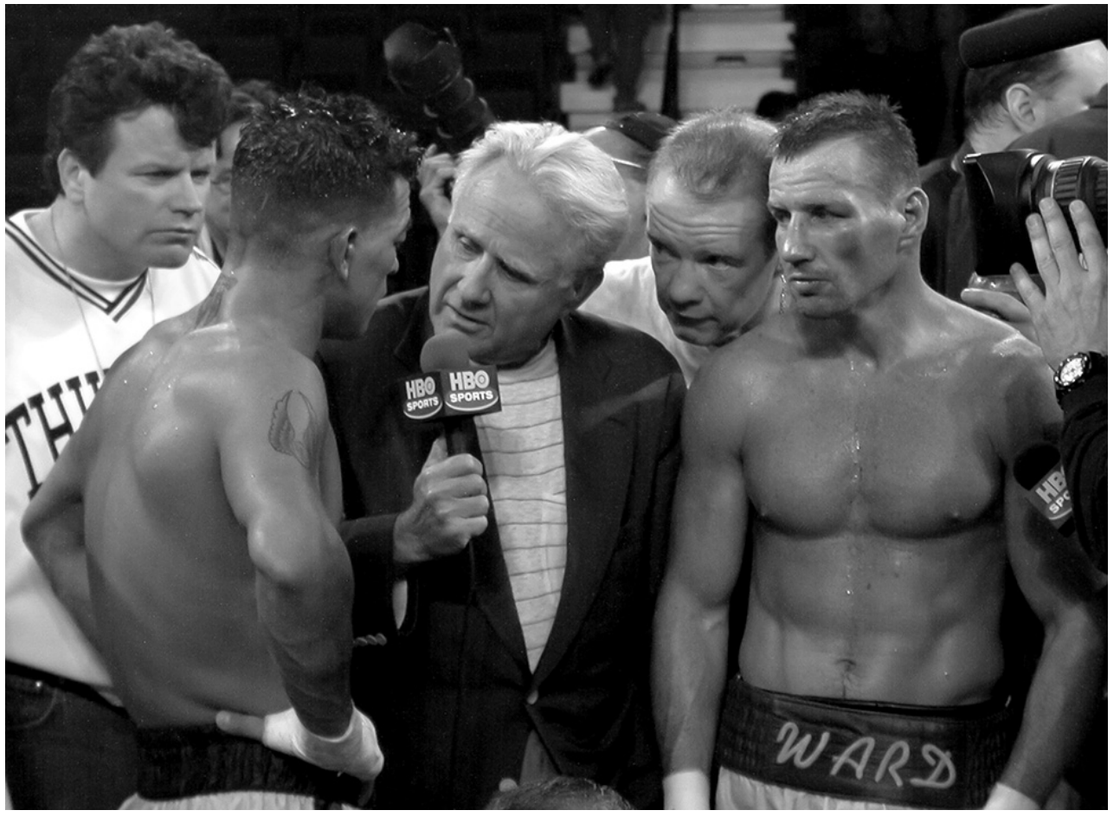

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78 COMING UP

Larry Merchant of HBO interviews Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward following their epic 2002 clash.

CALLING IT LIKE IT IS

Great piece by Steve Kim ("Boxing is Broken," February 2023). I absolutely love the idea of someone like Lou DiBella being a kind of boxing czar. The ideal solution would be to get rid of all the alphabet orgs and have just one title – i.e., Ring Magazine – for which everyone regards the holder as being the real champion, and then the broadcasters bidding to show the fights. Sadly, we all know this will never happen.

Danny Coveney

Steve Kim's series of Boxing is Broken is spot on ("Boxing is Broken: Part 2," April 2023). The harm to a fighter's career inactivity is causing can also be tied in with the oversaturation of PPVs plus, dare I say it, greed. It appears that each fighter that becomes "world champion" thinks they are automatically entitled to huge paydays. Gone are the days when they wanted to be active, defending their title whilst building momentum for a bigger fight. Now it's all "I want 10 titles at 10 weights for this amount!" whilst they sit around on social media claiming that the big names are ducking them. And because nearly every card is becoming PPV, there are now fewer dates for a particular promotional stable's boxers to get a slot. Titlists only want big money, and undercard fighters suffer because there aren't enough regular TV slots for them to appear on. Money is turning boxing into a niche sport, and the less fighters fight, the more fans will look elsewhere.

Dean Berks

Keep out the Feds. I agree with you 100 percent about keeping the government out of boxing ("Come Out Writing," April 2023). We talk about boxing being broken; there's nothing more broken than our government. Each of our two main political parties are more concerned with destroying each other than they are with working together, and both sides are just as guilty. Today's politicians would make an old-time mobster seem like a choir boy. I can see the headline now: "Government Appoints George Santos as New Boxing Czar"!

Michael Dolny

ON A MORE POSITIVE NOTE...

Just wanted to write and thank The Ring Magazine for their continuing coverage and dedication to the greatest sport on the planet. I've been a boxing fan since the age of 13, and as a 53-year-old man I STILL love it. This is because of the greatest names in the sport, like Marciano, Ali, Tyson, Leonard, Spinks, Duran, Pazienza, Gonzalez, Holyfield, Foreman, Johnson, Dempsey, Patterson … and the list goes on. Hope to see this magazine around for another 100 years.

Frank Estabrooks

JOE SCARNICI / STRINGER

ROY-AL BUMMER

In an alternate timeline, Roy Jones stays at heavyweight after his historic WBA heavyweight title win over John Ruiz and possibly goes down in history as the greatest fighter ever after fighting and conceivably beating an at-the-time-fading Holyfield and Tyson, if not a still-formidable Lennox Lewis. In this timeline, Roy Jones has become a parody of himself – the Neo from The Matrix that dazzled and ruled boxing for nine years, between his 1994 master class over James Toney and his 2003 clinic over Ruiz. In this timeline, he took the bait from Antonio Tarver, depleted himself too rapidly down to 175, and facing a combination of the weight loss, his hubris, Tarver's size and style and trainer Buddy McGirt's game plan, was stopped by Tarver and became a mortal with 10 losses (5 KOs) on his resume. It's in this timeline that he's reduced to fighting an exhibition against Mike Tyson as well as losing a decision to Anthony Pettis, an MMA fighter making his pro boxing debut. The "boxing is dying" crowd may want to take a look at the 2020 Tyson-

The success of Roy Jones Jr. and Mike Tyson's exhibition fight was a sign of the times.

Jones exhibition numbers, though: Two 50-something men fighting a non-competitive match reportedly brought in 1.6 million buys, which generated $80 million in revenue.

Bradley Morris

WRITE TO THE RING! comeoutwriting@gmail.com — Emailed letters will include a writer's email address unless a city and state of origin are provided. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

CO-MAIN EVENT

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

PRELIMS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

PRELIMS

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SEND EDITORIAL COMMENTS TO:
comeoutwriting@gmail.com
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RINGSIDE BY DOUG FISCHER

NEW FACE OF BOXING? (NOT YET)

Does Gervonta Davis have the muscle to pull in big numbers without a foil like Garcia?

An official press release on the pay-per-view numbers for the Gervonta Davis-Ryan Garcia showdown has yet to be issued, but the consensus among boxing insiders is that the April 22 event drew between 950,000 and 1.2 million buys, making it an unmitigated financial success.

The two most popular young Americans further proved that their loyal groupies and social media celebrity could transcend boxing's hardcore fandom by selling out T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas and producing the fifth highest gate in Nevada history.

Only Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s two biggest events – vs. Manny Pacquaio and Conor McGregor – and Canelo Alvarez-Gennadiy Golovkin I and II have generated more ticket revenue than the $22.8 million that Davis-Garcia earned at the box office.

All of which lends credence to the promoters' claims that the winner of the anticipated lightweight matchup would be the new "Face of Boxing." Davis – the overwhelming favorite going into the Showtime PPV event – believed himself to be the face of boxing before he stopped Garcia in the seventh round with a body shot and the 28-year-old boxer-puncher loudly proclaimed it in the ring after the fight.

"I'm definitely the face of boxing, ab-so-fucking-lutely," Davis told Jim Gray at the end of their post-fight interview.

Calm down, quipped Canelo Alvarez a few days before the Mexican star defended his undisputed super middleweight championship with a unanimous decision over John Ryder in his native Guadalajara.

"I'm not retired yet, my friend,"

HECTOR VIVAS / STRINGER

Canelo's fight against John Ryder filled a stadium in Mexico, but the PPV numbers were relatively low.

Alvarez told The Ring during a Zoom media roundtable prior to his May 6 homecoming, which was carried by DAZN PPV in the U.S. "They can say whatever they want, but it's not that easy. One fight does not put you in that position. You need to do a lot of things."

When asked to elaborate on his face-of-boxing criteria, Alvarez replied:

"Just fighting the best, again and again, up and down the weight classes, becoming undisputed, doing what I've been doing my whole career."

He didn't say it with any attitude or conceit. Canelo was stating facts.

The 32-year-old veteran has been one half of some of boxing's biggest events, beginning with his decision loss to Mayweather in September 2013. During that near 10-year span, Alvarez has been part of four pay-per-view events – vs. Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., Golovkin (I and II), and, of course, Mayweather – that garnered 1 million or more buys. (One other – his middleweight championship victory over Miguel Cotto – came very close with 900,000 buys).

I'm not bringing this up to piss on Tank's parade. Davis (29-0, 27 KOs) deserves his flowers from the Garcia victory. Even Canelo views him as a potential superstar.

"There are a lot of good fighters coming up; one of them is Gervonta for sure," Alvarez said. "I like Gervonta Davis a lot, but he needs to do more to be the face of boxing. One fight with Garcia – and I respect Ryan Garcia – isn't going to do it."

What will "do it" for Davis? Proving that he's a major pay-per-view draw without Garcia's help is a good place to start.

Prior to April 22, Davis had never been part of a pay-per-view main event that exceeded 300,000 buys. In his five previous bouts, all distributed by Showtime PPV in the U.S., Davis' highest pay-per-view tally was a reported 275,000 buys against Rolando Romero. The others averaged between 100,000-200,000 buys depending on the "sources" one chooses to believe. (There are "insiders" who claim his fight with Isaac Cruz did well under 100,000 buys.)

If Davis can legitimately exceed 300,000 buys – or, ideally, get around 500,000 – in rematches with Cruz and Romero, his face-of-boxing claims will begin to gain traction outside of his dedicated fan base.

I think Davis would have a much better chance of reaching those numbers if he faced the elite likes of Devin Haney, Vasiliy Lomachenko and Shakur Stevenson. I know, I know, matchups like those are easier said and written than done in today's fractured boxing landscape.

However, fans are sick of having to shell out an extra $75-$85 to watch every solid matchup that promoters finally get around to making.

Even Alvarez is learning that he must face high-profile opponents to get the numbers he's accustomed to. The Ryder bloodletting reportedly did around 235,000 buys, the first time one of his pay-per-view events delivered less than 300,000.

Since his undisputed super middleweight crowning glory against Caleb Plant garnered 800,000 buys in November 2021, Alvarez's PPV numbers have been disappointing by his lofty standards. The failed light heavyweight challenge against Dmitry Bivol last May "only" produced 550,000 buys; and the numbers for his rubber match with arch rival GGG were only slightly higher (domestically).

But if Alvarez wants to call himself the face of boxing – at least in North America – nobody can tell him otherwise. He's still filling up stadiums, as he did in Guadalajara (51,000 on May 6) and as he's done three times in Texas (the 73,000 that assembled to watch him break Billy Joe Saunders' face in Arlington on May 8, 2021, set the all-time indoor record for a boxing event in the U.S.)

No active fighter on this side of the Pond can sell as many tickets.

And since Davis is still somewhat affiliated with The Money Team (although no longer promoted by Mayweather), I'll go ahead and point out that Alvarez is the only boxer in Forbes' most recent ranking of the world's highest-paid athletes, clocking in at No. 5 with $110 million earned from May 1, 2022 to May 1, 2023 (so it does not include his purse for the Ryder fight).

Davis made a lot of money with the Garcia fight, but he's a long way from the World's 10 Highest-Paid Athletes list (No. 10 in the 2023 rankings, NBA veteran Kevin Durant, barely made it with $89.1 million). That's OK. There's more to being the face of boxing than making multi-millions.

What's more important for Davis right now is staying out of trouble. He was fortunate (some would say "privileged") to avoid jail time after pleading guilty to four of 14 counts from a November 2020 hit-and-run incident that left four people injured (including a pregnant woman who has a pending civil case against the Baltimore native).

On May 5, he was sentenced to 90 days of house arrest at the home of his trainer, Calvin Ford, and three years' probation (along with 200 hours of community service). Davis, who has been arrested on two domestic violence charges and one aggravated assault charge since 2017, can't afford to screw up again.

If he can keep his hands to himself between sanctioned bouts and let his teammates do the driving during the next 36 months, the sky may be the limit.

In the meantime, I don't have a problem with Davis proclaiming himself to be the face of boxing provided he challenges himself as Canelo and the other faces of boxing – Tyson Fury and Anthony Joshua in the U.K., Naoya Inoue in Japan – did when they were his age and continue to do.

NEW FACES

By Anson Wainwright

ABDULLAH MASON

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK INC VIA GETTY IMAGES

AGE: 19
HOMETOWN: Cleveland, Ohio
WEIGHT CLASS: Lightweight
HEIGHT: 5-foot-9 (175 cm)
AMATEUR RECORD: 65-15
TURNED PRO: 2021
PRO RECORD: 7-0 (6 knockouts)
TRAINER: Valiant Mason (father)
MANAGER: James Prince
PROMOTER: Top Rank
INSTAGRAM: @abdullah_mason

BEST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: Mason looked razor-sharp in dispatching Erick Benitez with a counter right hand in 92 seconds on the undercard of Robeisy Ramirez-Isaac Dogboe on April 1.

"I started comfortable, the way I would like to start out a fight," Mason told The Ring. "I controlled him with the jab, no pressure, no rushing. I ended it with something quick when I saw an opening and took it."

WORST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: The teenager feels if he had a do-over, he'd improve on last summer's victory over Angel Rebollar, which is Mason's only fight to go the distance thus far.

"Immediately after that fight, the next few days I was like, 'There's a lot of things I could have done in that fight but didn't,'" he said. "But that happens when you don't have the experience. Once you gain experience, you get to see a lot of things."

WHAT'S NEXT: Mason is tabbed to return on the undercard of undisputed lightweight champion Devin Haney's fight with Vasiliy Lomachenko at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas on May 20.

"I can't wait to show out on that one, for sure," he said, clearly hyped to be a part of such an illustrious event.

WHY HE'S A PROSPECT: Mason was a decorated amateur, winning the National Junior Olympics in 2017, the Eastern Regional Open in 2017 and 2018, and the Junior Open in 2018 and 2019. He also claimed the top prize at the USA Boxing Youth National tournament.

The Buckeye State-born fighter had been due to represent the U.S. at the Pan-Am Games but decided to turn professional instead.

"The main thing was the pandemic and my age with the next Olympics; it wouldn't have lined up with the next Olympics," he explained. "I just felt I was ready. That last tournament let me know; I was constantly getting better, just in the gym consistently. Even now, I'm just getting better."

Mason has sparred with several top fighters, notably lightweight champion Devin Haney and two-division titleholder Shakur Stevenson. The session with Haney was unplanned and only lasted a few rounds, but the work with Stevenson was more extensive.

"I did a full camp with him. I was his main sparring partner for three weeks, three times a week," he recalled. "It was amazing. That's the elite, the best it gets in boxing.

"I'd say the main thing I learned was patience. It was kind of a welcome to the pros. There's a lot of stuff that you switch over. He taught me to adjust in there."

Mason feels one thing sets him apart from other boxers: "My I.Q, probably how quickly I can adapt to fighters."

Hall-of-famer Tim Bradley, who now serves as a commentator for ESPN, believes Mason is a very well-rounded young fighter.

"Abdullah is an offensive-minded southpaw technician with a nasty thirst for counterpunching," said Bradley. "Mason has youth, as he just turned 19, has excellent timing, deceptive hand speed and punching power with pugilistic boxing skills.

"Abdullah seems to create offense off the front foot – first applied with a solid, educated jab – and off his back foot while still providing defensive responsibility. The application behind his skill is there, meaning not only does he have the know-how, but he also has the know-when during combat. From outside to mid-range, Mason is strong."

WHY HE'S A SUSPECT: It is still very early and Mason has been able to showcase his abilities so far. However, Top Rank will be ramping up the competition slowly but surely as he moves from six rounds into eight rounds and so on. How he adjusts will show us if Mason is as good as advertised.

The youngster knows that to improve he needs to heed the advice of his seniors, something not all young fighters want to do.

"They know what's best for me," he said. "Every time I listen to them and have a training camp, everything has shown up in every one of my fights. It comes naturally based off what they're teaching me. In boxing, you can always tighten up on anything.

Bradley believes everything is in place for Mason to reach the top; he just needs to continue working and fine-tuning in a couple of areas.

"I see some minor improvement in his overall physical strength, but he will need to continue to develop good technique and habits on the inside," he explained. "Mason can fight on the inside, but it's not a strong suit yet, as gaining comfort inside takes time to develop.

"Mason has no ceiling; it can be endless. And with his ultra-competitive nature, work ethic and discipline in and out of the ring, he can be a hall of famer – but only if he can take it on the chin."

STORYLINES: Mason, who is the second-youngest of six brothers, was born in the small city of Bedford, Ohio, just over 15 miles east of Cleveland.

"Before I officially started boxing, we were always into combat sports," he explained. "My big brothers were into it. There's six of us, three sets of three. The older three were always into combat sports, and whenever they'd finish up their session, they'd come back home and teach it to us."

Their mother was a teacher and home-schooled them, and their father had a fragrance business that meant the family often moved around.

"We lived overseas for a while; we lived in Yemen and Egypt for a year," he said. "So we experienced different things.

"When we moved back [to the U.S., there] was a gym around the corner from where we lived. I was around 9 years old and my father got us into it. All of us were interested, but I was the first one to step into the gym and start training. My brothers on either side of me joined right after me. When I was 12, 13, I was like, 'OK, this is what I want to do.' I pretty much won everything after that.

"Everything after that was pretty much boxing. We loved it and it was something we wanted to do. Then the older two brothers joined in, and after a while it became a family thing."

Currently five of the six brother's box, though eldest brother Amir (4-0, 3 KOs) is the only other sibling to box professionally.

Abdullah says his boxing hero is legendary former welterweight and middleweight champion Sugar Ray Robinson.

"He's an originator of a lot of things in boxing. Even Muhammad Ali molded himself off Sugar Ray Robinson," he said. "There's a lot of things he started as far as his style – I like watching him."

As for goals?

"Just to be the best at my craft," he said. "Keep winning, support my brothers – all of us have a shared goal of being world champions.

"Everything we do, we do all together. They're my identity. We're always hanging out." RING

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter@AnsonWainwright.

ROUND 1

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH ★ NEW FACES +

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

BY BRIAN HARTY

ZHILEI ZHANG

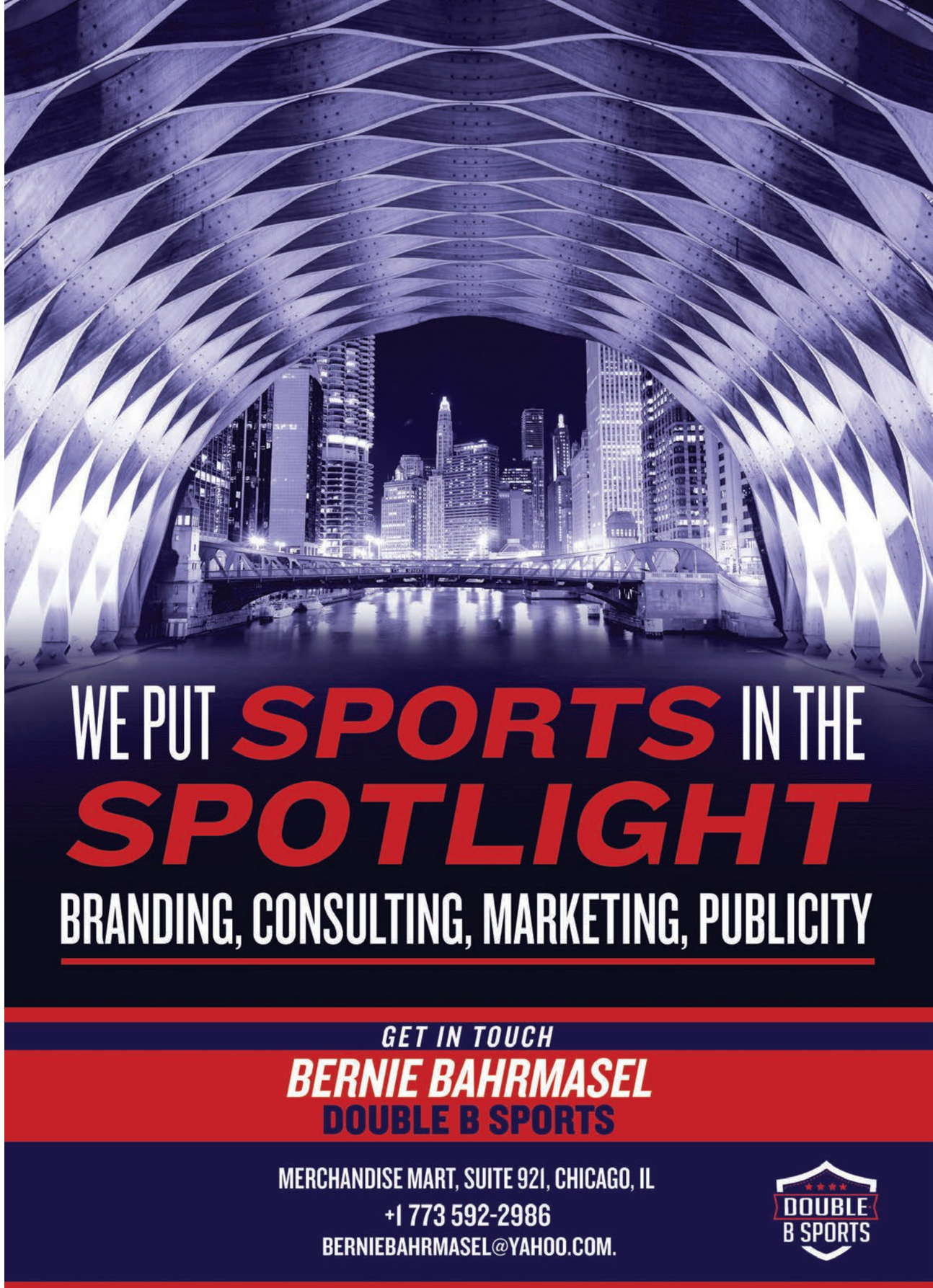
With 1.4 billion people and a proven hunger for producing elite athletes, it's impossible to go against the odds and believe that China isn't harboring enough talent to target every division in professional boxing. And yet, the most populated country on the planet has been almost completely absent from the world stage, only sending its first fighter into the pro ranks – junior lightweight Liu Gang – in 1996. The Ring has had only three Chinese boxers in its rankings: flyweight Zou Shiming in 2016, featherweight Xu Can in 2019 and, most recently, this month's man in the spotlight, heavyweight Zhang Zhilei (or Zhilei Zhang in the Western style). Zhang had already dipped his toe into the ratings after a debatable loss to Filip Hrgovic in August 2022, but his tenure was brief. The win that got him back on the list wasn't debatable at all.

Banter leading up to the fight against Joe Joyce was playful by modern standards, enough so that Zhang had the sympathies of those who don't enjoy seeing nice guys lose. But playtime ended the moment referee Howard Foster's hand dropped on April 15 in east London. The visitor, equal in height but the heavier man by 22 pounds, moved forward on eager feet and quickly unfurled the weapon that would dictate the course of the night: a southpaw left cross that absolutely couldn't miss Joyce's face. It staggered the Londoner halfway into Round 2 and would chip away at his right eye until it turned into a sightless plum, a condition that would ultimately result in Foster calling the fight off in Round 6. Zhang was far from a one-punch pony, though. Jabs, body shots and hooks all contributed to the result, and his 46 percent connect rate wasn't just because of Joyce's cabbage-like lack of head movement – the dude is accurate.

Near the end, Joyce seemed to be gaining some momentum and would later attribute his slow start to being out of practice against southpaws. He would also activate his rematch clause. But, as Zhang so nicely put it, "Today belongs to me."

As for tomorrow, the 40-year-old "Big Bang" would love a title shot against Oleksandr Usyk, but that might take awhile. If a redo is next, he wants the Joyce rematch to happen in China – not ambiguously, as with Zou's multiple outings in Macau, but at the Bird's Nest in Beijing. And that would truly be something, an East vs. West heavyweight battle in an 80,000-seat stadium in the capital of China. Along with the recent expansion into the Middle East, it's the sort of event that could solidify a ring of boxing that surrounds the globe. RING

JAMES CHANCE



RATINGS

SUMMARY ★ ANALYSIS

The Ring Ratings covering fight results from May 6, 2023

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK INC. /

Jared Anderson (right) cracked the heavyweight rankings with a third-round stoppage of George Arias but was later displaced by Zhilei Zhang.

RECENT FIGHT RESULTS AND CHANGES IN THE RING'S DIVISIONAL RANKINGS

BY BRIAN HARTY

POUND FOR POUND: Gervonta Davis (unrated last month) won the internet by knocking out Ryan Garcia with a body shot in Round 7 of their superfight, which exceeded expectations in terms of viewership numbers and didn't disappoint those viewers hoping to see a superfight that didn't tarnish the label. The Ratings Panel wasn't unanimous in recommending Tank for induction based on a fight he was favored to win, but he got the votes to crack the list at No. 10, replacing Artur Beterbiev.

HEAVYWEIGHT: While Frank Sanchez (No. 10 last month) didn't impress the panel with the 101 seconds of effort he expended in knocking out journeyman Daniel Martz, Jared Anderson (unrated last month) scored a meaningful victory with his third-round stoppage of George Arias, who was unbeaten up to that point, and thus took over the bottom spot on the list.

Anderson then got booted when Zhilei Zhang secured perhaps the upset of the month (though some might favor the lumberjacking that took place at 154) by impressively busting up Joe Joyce's face and stopping him on doctor's advice in Round 6. The 39-year-old southpaw from China was rewarded with the favored Brit's No. 4 ranking as a result, with Joyce sinking to No. 7.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: Oleksandr Gvozdyk reentered the ratings at No. 9 after a sixth-round TKO of Ricards Bolotniks, which coincided with No. 9-rated Craig Richards being removed for inactivity.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT: David Morrell (No. 5 last month) mercilessly hammered Yamaguchi Falcao for a little over two minutes before anesthetizing him with a right hook in the opening round. Morrell was promoted to No. 4.

Just to make mention of it, division champ Canelo Alvarez's Guadalajara homecoming, a unanimous decision win over John Ryder (No. 5), had no effect on the ratings.

MIDDLEWEIGHT: Meiirum Nursultanov remained unbeaten and rose from No. 10 to No. 8 after an eighth-round stoppage of Kazuto Takesako in South Korea.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT: Brian Mendoza (unrated last month) had to aim his punches about 30 degrees upward to reach the face of 6-foot-5½ Sebastian Fundora (No. 3 at the time), but he found the mark perfectly with a monster left hook in Round 7, crumpling and exposing "The Towering Inferno" for a two-punch follow-up that felled the odds-on favorite for the 12-count. The previously unbeaten Fundora, who'd been winning on the cards up to that point, dropped to No. 7 in the ratings while Mendoza logged in at No. 6, pushing out No. 10-rated Charles Conwell.

Magomed Kurbanov (No. 4 last month) won a split decision over Michel Soro in Ekaterinburg, but the result was such an obvious example of Russian home cooking that one panelist invoked the "robbery clause" and others agreed. Kurbanov (whose win over Liam Smith in May 2021, same location, was also controversial) was subsequently ejected from the list and Soro was installed at No. 10.

LIGHTWEIGHT: Gustavo Lemos (No. 8 last month) hasn't fought since his stoppage victory over Lee Selby in March 2022, so he was removed and Jamaine Ortiz – last seen making a good account of himself as Vasiliy Lomachenko's "tune-up" for Devin Haney – entered at No. 10.

Shakur Stevenson made an unsurprisingly impressive debut at lightweight, pretty much turning Shuichiro Yoshino into his plaything for six rounds until the ref had seen enough. It was the first time Yoshino (No. 9 at the time) had risked his perfect record outside of Japan, and he paid for the gamble with his ranking while Stevenson obtained one at No. 5. On the same card, then-unrated Keyshawn Davis stopped Anthony Yigit in nine and replaced Ortiz in the No. 10 slot.

Ryan Garcia dropped from No. 3 to No. 4 after the loss to Tank, who remained at No. 2, pending the result of Haney (champion) vs. Lomachenko (No. 1) on May 20. It's worth noting that Davis-Garcia did take place at a catchweight that technically made it a junior welterweight fight, but they're both ranked as lightweights and the theme of the promotion was "two lightweights," so we're applying the outcome here. Also worth noting, though, is that Garcia said he plans on moving to 140.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT: Joe Cordina (No. 5 last month) regained his IBF title – he was stripped in October after hand surgery forced him to withdraw from a mandatory defense against Shavkatdzhon Rakhimov, who then picked up the belt by beating Zelfa Barrett in November – with a split decision over the guy he was scheduled to face in the first place. Cordina was lifted to No. 3, which dropped Rakhimov (No. 4 last month) one notch.

FEATHERWEIGHT: Two-time Olympic gold medalist Robeisy Ramirez shockingly lost his pro debut in August 2019, but the Cuban has won 12 straight since then and is now the WBO titleholder after widely outpointing Isaac Dogboe (unrated). Ramirez got a bump from No. 9 to No. 5 as a result.

2021 Comeback of the Year winner Kiko Martinez (No. 9 last month), perhaps finally showing the cost of being a 37-year-old with 58 prizefights, departed the list after losing a wide decision to Reiya Abe, who entered at No. 10.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT: Marlos Tapales (No. 6 last month) brought both guts and skills to bear in upsetting No. 2-rated Murodjon Akhmadaliev with a narrow split-verdict victory. In the process, Tapales took the Uzbekistani's two belts, his ranking and his on-deck status to possibly face the winner of Stephen Fulton-Naoya Inoue. Inoue's younger brother Takuma, meanwhile, dropped down to bantamweight for a decision win over Liborio Solis and gave up his No. 10 spot, which then went to Australian Sam Goodman.

BANTAMWEIGHT: Takuma's victory over Solis nabbed him the vacant WBA title (previously held by Naoya) and a ranking at No. 8; Solis lost his position at No. 10.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT: Jesse Rodriguez (No. 4 last month) dropped down to flyweight for a shot at becoming a two-division titleholder, so he was removed and undefeated Mexican David Cuellar took up the slack at No. 10.

FLYWEIGHT: Rodriguez succeeded in that shot, winning a clear-cut decision over Cristian Gonzalez to seize the vacant WBO belt. The 23-year-old "Bam" was drafted at No. 4, which pushed out No. 10-rated Seigo Yuri Akui.

STRAWWEIGHT: The Shigeoka family is two knockouts richer after Ginjiro finished off Rene Mark Cuarto in nine rounds and older brother Yudai dispatched Wilfredo Mendez in seven on the same card in Tokyo. Ginjiro rose from No. 8 to No. 5 in the rankings and Yudai entered at No. 6, while on the flipside, Mendez dropped from No. 5 to No. 9 and Cuarto (No. 7 last month) ended up at No. 8.

P4P

1 **OLEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 20-0-0 (13 KOs)

2 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)

3 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 39-0-0 (30 KOs)

4 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)

5 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 59-2-2 (39 KOs)

6 **DMITRY BIVOL**
Russia • 21-0-0 (11 KOs)

7 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 17-2-0 (11 KOs)

8 **JOSH TAYLOR**
U.K. • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)

9 **JERMELL CHARLO**
U.S. • 35-1-1 (19 KOs)

10 **GERVONTA DAVIS**
U.S. • 29-0-0 (27 KOs)

A majority of the Ratings Panel voted that Gervonta Davis has proven enough to join the mythical pound-for-pound ratings.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C **OLEKSANDR USYK** RING, IBF, WBA, WBO
Ukraine • 20-0-0 (13 KOs)
1 **TYSON FURY** WBC
U.K. • 33-0-1 (24 KOs)
2 **DEONTAY WILDER**
U.S. • 43-2-1 (42 KOs)
3 **ANTHONY JOSHUA**
U.K. • 25-3-0 (22 KOs)
4 **ZHILEI ZHANG**
China • 25-1-1 (20 KOs)
5 **ANDY RUIZ JR.**
U.S. • 35-2-0 (22 KOs)
6 **DILLIAN WHYTE**
U.K. • 29-3-0 (19 KOs)
7 **JOE JOYCE**
U.K. • 15-1-0 (14 KOs)
8 **LUIS ORTIZ**
Cuba • 33-3-0 (28 KOs)
9 **JOSEPH PARKER**
New Zealand • 31-3-0 (21 KOs)
10 **FILIP HRGOVIC**
Croatia • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C **JAI OPETAIA** RING, IBF
Australia • 22-0-0 (17 KOs)
1 **LAWRENCE OKOLIE** WBO
U.K. • 19-0-0 (14 KOs)
2 **MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
Latvia • 28-2-0 (20 KOs)
3 **YUNIEL DORTICOS**
Cuba • 26-2-0 (24 KOs)
4 **BADOU JACK** WBC
Sweden • 28-3-3 (17 KOs)
5 **ILUNGA MAKABU**
Congo • 29-3-0 (25 KOs)
6 **RICHARD RIAKPORHE**
U.K. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
7 **ALEKSEI PAPIN**
Russia • 15-1-0 (14 KOs)
8 **ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN**
France • 27-0-0 (18 KOs)
9 **MATEUSZ MASTERNAK**
Poland • 47-5-0 (31 KOs)
10 **CHRIS BILLAM-SMITH**
U.K. • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **DMITRY BIVOL** WBA
Russia • 21-0-0 (11 KOs)
2 **ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC, WBO
Russia • 19-0-0 (19 KOs)
3 **CALLUM SMITH**
U.K. • 29-1-0 (21 KOs)
4 **GILBERTO RAMIREZ**
Mexico • 44-1-0 (30 KOs)
5 **JOE SMITH JR.**
U.S. • 28-4-0 (22 KOs)
6 **ANTHONY YARDE**
U.K. • 23-3-0 (22 KOs)
7 **JOSHUA BUATSI**
U.K. • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)
8 **DAN AZEEZ**
U.K. • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)
9 **OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK**
U.K. • 19-1-0 (15 KOs)
10 **MICHAEL EIFERT**
Germany • 12-1-0 (4 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
Mexico • 59-2-2 (39 KOs)
1 **DAVID BENAVIDEZ**
U.S. • 27-0-0 (23 KOs)
2 **CALEB PLANT**
U.S. • 22-2-0 (13 KOs)
3 **CHRISTIAN MBILLI**
France • 24-0-0 (20 KOs)
4 **DAVID MORRELL**
Cuba • 9-0-0 (8 KOs)
5 **JOHN RYDER**
U.K. • 32-6-0 (18 KOs)
6 **ANTHONY DIRRELL**
U.S. • 34-3-2 (25 KOs)
7 **ERIK BAZINYAN**
Canada • 29-0-0 (21 KOs)
8 **VLADIMIR SHISHKIN**
Russia • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)
9 **ZACH PARKER**
U.K. • 22-1-0 (16 KOs)
10 **ALI AKHMEDOV**
Kazakhstan • 19-1-0 (14 KOs)

AL BELLO

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF, WBA
Kazakhstan • 42-2-1 (37 KOs)
2 **JAIME MUNGUIA**
Mexico • 41-0-0 (33 KOs)
3 **ZHANIBEK ALIMKHANULY** WBO
Kazakhstan • 13-0-0 (8 KOs)
4 **CARLOS ADAMES**
Dom. Rep. • 22-1-0 (17 KOs)
5 **LIAM SMITH**
U.K. • 33-3-1 (20 KOs)
6 **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO**
Ukraine • 14-4-0 (10 KOs)
7 **ERISLANDY LARA**
Cuba • 29-3-3 (17 KOs)
8 **MEIIRIM NURSULTANOV**
Kazakhstan • 19-0-0 (11 KOs)
9 **FELIX CASH**
U.K. • 16-0-0- (10 KOs)
10 **CHRIS EUBANK JR.**
U.K. • 32-3-0 (23 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

C **JERMELL CHARLO** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 35-1-1 (19 KOs)
1 **TIM TSZYU**
Australia • 22-0-0 (16 KOs)
2 **BRIAN CASTANO**
Argentina • 17-1-2 (12 KOs)
3 **ERICKSON LUBIN**
U.S. • 24-2-0 (17 KOs)
4 **LIAM SMITH**
U.K. • 33-3-1 (20 KOs)
5 **BRIAN MENDOZA**
U.S. • 22-2-0 (16 KOs)
6 **SEBASTIAN FUNDORA**
U.S. • 20-1-1 (13 KOs)
7 **ISRAIL MADRIMOV**
Uzbekistan • 9-0-1 (6 KOs)
8 **JESUS RAMOS**
U.S. • 20-0-0 (16 KOs)
9 **TONY HARRISON**
U.S. • 29-4-1 (21 KOs)
10 **MICHEL SORO**
France • 35-3-2 (24 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBA, WBC
U.S. • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)
2 **TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO
U.S. • 39-0-0 (30 KOs)
3 **JARON ENNIS**
U.S. • 30-0-0 (27 KOs)
4 **YORDENIS UGAS**
Cuba • 27-5-0 (12 KOs)
5 **VERGIL ORTIZ JR.**
U.S. • 19-0-0 (19 KOs)
6 **EIMANTAS STANIONIS**
Lithuania • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
7 **RADZHAB BUTAEV**
Russia • 14-1-0 (11 KOs)
8 **CODY CROWLEY**
Canada • 22-0-0 (9 KOs)
9 **DAVID AVANESYAN**
Russia • 29-4-1 (17 KOs)
10 **ALEXIS ROCHA**
U.S. • 22-1-0 (14 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

C **JOSH TAYLOR** RING, WBO
U.K. • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)
1 **REGIS PROGRAIS** WBC
U.S. • 28-1-0 (24 KOs)
2 **JOSE RAMIREZ**
U.S. • 28-1-0 (18 KOs)
3 **SUBRIEL MATIAS**
Puerto Rico • 19-1-0 (19 KOs)
4 **JACK CATTERALL**
U.K. • 26-1-0 (13 KOs)
5 **ARNOLD BARBOZA**
U.S. • 28-0-0 (10 KOs)
6 **JOSE ZEPEDA**
U.S. • 36-3-0 (27 KOs)
7 **GARY ANTUANNE RUSSELL**
U.S. • 16-0-0 (16 KOs)
8 **SHOHJAHON ERGASHEV**
Uzbekistan • 23-0-0 (20 KOs)
9 **ALBERTO PUELLO** WBA
Dom. Rep. • 21-0-0 (10 KOs)
10 **TEOFIMO LOPEZ**
U.S. • 18-1-0 (13 KOs)

Oleksandr Gvozdyk reentered the light heavyweight rankings after stopping Ricards Bolotniks in six rounds on the Canelo-Ryder undercard.

Canelo's win over Ryder produced a full stadium and plenty of blood, but the ratings stayed the same.

GVOZDYK: HECTOR VIVAS / STRINGER; CANELO: HECTOR VIVAS / STRINGER

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

C **DEVIN HANEY** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 29-0-0 (15 KOs)
1 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 17-2-0 (11 KOs)
2 **GERVONTA DAVIS**
U.S. • 29-0-0 (27 KOs)
3 **ISAAC CRUZ**
Mexico • 24-2-1 (17 KOs)
4 **RYAN GARCIA**
U.S. • 23-1-0 (19 KOs)
5 **SHAKUR STEVENSON**
U.S. • 20-0-0 (10 KOs)
6 **FRANK MARTIN**
U.S. • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
7 **GEORGE KAMBOSOS JR.**
Australia • 20-2-0 (10 KOs)
8 **WILLIAM ZEPEDA**
Mexico • 28-0-0 (24 KOs)
9 **MAXI HUGHES**
U.K. • 26-5-2 (5 KOs)
10 **KEYSHAWN DAVIS**
U.S. • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **OSCAR VALDEZ**
Mexico • 30-1-0 (23 KOs)
2 **HECTOR GARCIA** WBA
Dom. Rep. • 16-1-0 (10 KOs)
3 **JOE CORDINA** IBF
U.K. • 16-0-0 (9 KOs)
4 **O'SHAQUIE FOSTER**
U.S. • 20-2-0 (11 KOs)
5 **SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV**
Russia • 17-1-1 (14 KOs)
6 **ROBSON CONCEICAO**
Brazil • 17-2-0 (8 KOs)
7 **ROGER GUTIERREZ**
Venezuela • 27-4-1 (21 KOs)
8 **KENICHI OGAWA**
Japan • 27-2-1 (19 KOs)
9 **LAMONT ROACH**
U.S. • 23-1-1 (9 KOs)
10 **ALBERT BELL**
U.S. • 22-0-0 (6 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **MAURICIO LARA** WBA
Mexico • 26-2-1 (19 KOs)
2 **REY VARGAS** WBC
Mexico • 36-1-0 (22 KOs)
3 **LUIS ALBERTO LOPEZ** IBF
Mexico • 27-2-0 (15 KOs)
4 **BRANDON FIGUEROA**
U.S. • 24-1-1 (18 KOs)
5 **ROBEISY RAMIREZ** WBO
Cuba • 12-1-0 (7 KOs)
6 **MARK MAGSAYO**
Phil. • 24-2-0 (16 KOs)
7 **LEIGH WOOD**
U.K. • 26-3-0 (16 KOs)
8 **JOSH WARRINGTON**
U.K. • 31-2-1 (8 KOs)
9 **MICHAEL CONLAN**
Ireland • 18-1-0 (9 KOs)
10 **REIYA ABE**
Japan • 25-3-1 (10 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **STEPHEN FULTON** WBC, WBO
U.S. • 21-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **MARLON TAPALES** IBF, WBA
Phil. • 37-3-0 (19 KOs)
3 **MURODJON AKHMADALIEV**
Uzbekistan • 11-1-0 (8 KOs)
4 **LUIS NERY**
Mexico • 34-1-0 (26 KOs)
5 **RA'EESE ALEEM**
U.S. • 20-0-0 (12 KOs)
6 **AZAT HOVHANNISYAN**
Armenia • 21-4-0 (17 KOs)
7 **RONNY RIOS**
U.S. • 33-4-0 (16 KOs)
8 **ZOLANI TETE**
S. Africa • 30-4-0 (23 KOs)
9 **MIKE PLANIA**
Phil. • 27-2-0 (14 KOs)
10 **SAM GOODMAN**
Australia • 14-0-0 (7 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights as of May 6, 2023

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** Japan • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **1** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ** Puerto Rico • 21-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **2** **JASON MOLONEY** Australia • 25-2-0 (19 KOs)
- **3** **NONITO DONAIRE** Phil. • 42-7-0 (28 KOs)
- **4** **VINCENT ASTROLABIO** Phil. • 18-3-0 (13 KOs)
- **5** **GARY ANTONIO RUSSELL** U.S. • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **6** **ALEJANDRO SANTIAGO** Mexico • 27-3-5 (14 KOs)
- **7** **PAUL BUTLER** U.K. • 34-3-0 (15 KOs)
- **8** **TAKUMA INOUE** WBA Japan • 18-1-0 (4 KOs)
- **9** **RYOSUKE NISHIDA** Japan • 7-0-0 (1 KO)
- **10** **KEITA KURIHARA** Japan • 17-7-1 (15 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBC Mexico • 44-3-0 (28 KOs)
- **1** **ROMAN GONZALEZ** Nicaragua • 51-4-0 (41 KOs)
- **2** **KAZUTO IOKA** Japan • 29-2-1 (15 KOs)
- **3** **JOSHUA FRANCO** U.S. • 18-1-3 (8 KOs)
- **4** **FERNANDO MARTINEZ** IBF Argentina • 15-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **5** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI** Thailand • 51-6-1 (44 KOs)
- **6** **JUNTO NAKATANI** Japan • 24-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **7** **KOSEI TANAKA** Japan • 18-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **8** **ANDREW MOLONEY** Australia • 25-2-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.** Mexico • 37-6-1 (25 KOs)
- **10** **DAVID CUELLAR** Mexico • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **SUNNY EDWARDS** IBF U.K. • 19-0-0 (4 KOs)
- **2** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC Mexico • 20-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA Ukraine • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **4** **JESSE RODRIGUEZ** WBO U.S. • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **5** **ANGEL AYALA LARDIZABAL** Mexico • 16-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **6** **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO** Puerto Rico • 21-4-0 (16 KOs)
- **7** **DAVID JIMENEZ** Costa Rica • 12-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **8** **RICARDO SANDOVAL** U.S. • 21-2-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **FELIX ALVARADO** Nicaragua • 38-3-0 (33 KOs)
- **10** **CRISTOFER ROSALES** Nicaragua • 35-6-0 (21 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** RING, WBA, WBC Japan • 21-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **1** **JONATHAN GONZALEZ** WBO Puerto Rico • 27-3-1 (14 KOs)
- **2** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** Japan • 16-1-0 (11 KOs)
- **3** **HEKKIE BUDLER** S. Africa • 35-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **4** **ELWIN SOTO** Mexico • 19-3-0 (13 KOs)
- **5** **SIVENATHI NONTSHINGA** IBF S. Africa • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **6** **MASAMICHI YABUKI** Japan • 15-4-0 (14 KOs)
- **7** **DANIEL MATELLON** Cuba • 13-0-2 (7 KOs)
- **8** **ESTEBAN BERMUDEZ** Mexico • 14-4-2 (10 KOs)
- **9** **CARLOS CANIZALES** Venezuela • 25-1-1 (19 KOs)
- **10** **SHOKICHI IWATA** Japan • 10-1-0 (7 KOs)

Yamaguchi Falcao steamrolled David Morrell with a first-round knockout, improving his super middleweight ranking in the process.

Keyshawn Davis' ninth-round stoppage of Anthony Yigit earned the Virginian a spot on the lightweight list.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA Thailand • 24-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **PETCHMANEE CP FRESHMART** WBC Thailand • 39-1-0 (23 KOs)
- **3** **MELVIN JERUSALEM** WBO Phil. • 20-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN** Thailand • 55-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **5** **GINJIRO SHIGEOKA** Japan • 9-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **6** **YUDAI SHIGEOKA** Japan • 7-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **7** **DANIEL VALLADARES** IBF Mexico • 26-3-1 (15 KOs)
- **8** **RENE MARK CUARTO** Phil. • 21-4-2 (12 KOs)
- **9** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** Puerto Rico • 18-3-0 (6 KOs)
- **10** **OSCAR COLLAZO** U.S. • 6-0-0 (4 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

DAVID MORRELL, JR.: AL BELLO / STAFF; DAVIS: ELSA / STAFF

WOMEN'S RATINGS

Through fights as of May 13, 2023

POUND FOR POUND

- **1** **CLARESSA SHIELDS** U.S. • 13-0-0 (2 KOs)
- **2** **KATIE TAYLOR** Ireland • 22-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **3** **AMANDA SERRANO** Puerto Rico • 44-2-1 (30 KOs)
- **4** **CHANTELLE CAMERON** U.K. • 17-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **5** **SENIESA ESTRADA** U.S. • 24-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **6** **JESSICA MCCASKILL** U.S. • 12-3-0 (5 KOs)
- **7** **DELFINE PERSOON** Belgium • 47-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **8** **ALYCIA BAUMGARDNER** U.S. • 14-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **9** **MIKAELA MAYER** U.S. • 18-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **NATASHA JONAS** U.K. • 13-2-1 (8 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

- **C** **FRANCHON CREWS-DEZURN** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO U.S. • 8-1-0 (2 KOs)
- **1** **SHADASIA GREEN** U.S. • 12-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **2** **ELIN CEDERROOS** Sweden • 8-2-0 (4 KOs)
- **3** **CHRISTINA HAMMER** Germany • 28-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **JANINA NEUMANN** Germany • 5-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **5** **RAQUEL MILLER** U.S. • 13-0-0 (6 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C** **CLARESSA SHIELDS** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO U.S. • 13-0-0 (2 KOs)
- **1** **SAVANNAH MARSHALL** U.K. • 12-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **CHRISTINA HAMMER** Germany • 28-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **3** **EMA KOZIN** Slovenia • 22-1-1 (12 KOs)
- **4** **FEMKE HERMANS** Belgium • 15-4-0 (6 KOs)
- **5** **RAQUEL MILLER** U.S. • 13-0-0 (6 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C** **NATASHA JONAS** RING, IBF, WBC, WBO U.K. • 13-2-1 (8 KOs)
- **1** **TERRI HARPER** WBA U.K. • 13-1-1 (6 KOs)
- **2** **MARIE EVE DICAIRE** Canada • 18-2-0 (1 KO)
- **3** **PATRICIA BERGHULT** Sweden • 16-1-0 (4 KOs)
- **4** **HANNAH RANKIN** U.K. • 13-6-0 (3 KOs)
- **5** **FEMKE HERMANS** Belgium • 15-4-0 (6 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C** **JESSICA MCCASKILL** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO U.S. • 12-3-0 (5 KOs)
- **1** **CECILIA BRAEKHUS** Norway • 37-2-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **SANDY RYAN** U.K. • 6-1-0 (2 KOs)
- **3** **IVANA HABAZIN** Croatia • 21-4-0 (7 KOs)
- **4** **MARIE PIER HOULE** Canada • 8-1-1 (2 KOs)
- **5** **LAUREN PRICE** U.K. • 4-0-0 (1 KO)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C** **CHANTELLE CAMERON** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO U.K. • 17-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **1** **SANDY RYAN** U.K. • 6-1-0 (2 KOs)
- **2** **KALI REIS** U.S. • 19-7-1 (5 KOs)
- **3** **ERICA FARIAS** Argentina • 27-7-0 (10 KOs)
- **4** **OSHIN DERIEUW** Belgium • 19-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **5** **MARY MCGEE** U.S. • 28-4-0 (16 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C** **KATIE TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO Ireland • 22-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **1** **AMANDA SERRANO** Puerto Rico • 44-2-1 (30 KOs)
- **2** **DELFINE PERSOON** Belgium • 47-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **3** **ESTELLE MOSSELY** Belgium • 11-0-0 (1 KOs)
- **4** **MIKAELA MAYER** U.S. • 18-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **5** **MAIRA MONEO** Uruguay • 12-1-0 (2 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

- **C** **ALYCIA BAUMGARDNER** RING,IBF,WBA,WBC,WBO U.S. • 14-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **1** **MIKAELA MAYER** U.S. • 18-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **2** **DELFINE PERSOON** Belgium • 47-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **3** **MAIVA HAMADOUCHE** France • 22-2-0 (18 KOs)
- **4** **HYUN MI CHOI** South Korea • 20-0-1 (5 KOs)
- **5** **BO MI RE SHIN** South Korea • 15-1-3 (8 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C** **AMANDA SERRANO** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO Puerto Rico • 44-2-1 (30 KOs)
- **1** **ERIKA CRUZ HERNANDEZ** Mexico • 15-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **2** **SARAH MAHFOUD** Denmark • 12-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **3** **JELENA MRDJENOVICH** Canada • 41-12-2 (19 KOs)
- **4** **NINA MEINKE** Germany • 16-3-0 (4 KOs)
- **5** **BRENDA CARBAJAL** Argentina • 18-5-1 (9 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **SEGOLENE LEFEBVRE** WBO France • 17-0-0 (1 KO)
- **2** **YAMILETH MERCADO** WBC Mexico • 21-3-0 (5 KOs)
- **3** **MAUREEN SHEA** U.S. • 30-2-1 (13 KOs)
- **4** **CHERNEKA JOHNSON** IBF Australia • 15-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **5** **ELLIE SCOTNEY** U.K. • 6-0-0 (0 KOs)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **DINA THORSLUND** WBO Denmark • 19-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **2** **YULIHAN LUNA AVILA** WBC Mexico • 25-3-1 (4 KOs)
- **3** **EBANIE BRIDGES** IBF Australia • 9-1-0 (4 KOs)
- **4** **NINA HUGHES** WBA U.K. • 5-0-0 (2 KOs)
- **5** **MARIANA JUAREZ** Mexico • 55-12-4 (19 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **DIANA FERNANDEZ** Mexico • 27-4-1 (4 KOs)
- **2** **ASLEY GONZALEZ** WBC Mexico • 16-2-0 (7 KOs)
- **3** **LOURDES JUAREZ** Mexico • 34-4-0 (4 KOs)
- **4** **MICAELA LUJAN** IBF Argentina • 11-1-1 (3 KOs)
- **5** **ADELAIDA RUIZ** U.S. • 13-0-1 (7 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **MARLEN ESPARZA** RING,WBA,WBC U.S. • 13-1-0 (1 KOs)
- **1** **NAOKO FUJIOKA** Japan • 19-3-1 (7 KOs)
- **2** **GABRIELA ALANIZ** Argentina • 14-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **3** **ARELY MUCINO** IBF Mexico • 32-3-2 (11 KOs)
- **4** **KENIA ENRIQUEZ** Mexico • 25-1-0 (11 KOs)
- **5** **GABRIELA FUNDORA** U.S. • 11-0-0 (4 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **SENIESA ESTRADA** U.S. • 24-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **JESSICA NERY PLATA** WBA, WBC Mexico • 29-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **3** **EVELYN BERMUDEZ** IBF, WBO Argentina • 18-1-1 (6 KOs)
- **4** **KIM CLAVEL** Canada • 17-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **5** **LEONELA YUDICA** Argentina • 19-1-3 (1 KO)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **SENIESA ESTRADA** RING, WBA, WBC U.S. • 24-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1** **YOKASTA VALLE** IBF, WBO Nicaragua • 28-2-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **CHRISTINA RUPPRECHT** WBC Germany • 12-1-1 (3 KOs)
- **3** **SARAH BORMANN** Germany • 16-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **4** **ANABEL ORTIZ** Mexico • 33-5-0 (4 KOs)
- **5** **JESSICA BASULTO** Mexico • 11-1-0 (3 KOs)

ATOMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 102 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **FABIANA BYTYQI** WBC Czech Rep. • 20-0-2 (5 KOs)
- **2** **MONSERRAT ALARCON** WBA Mexico • 18-4-2 (0 KOs)
- **3** **YUKO KUROKI** WBO Japan • 21-7-2 (9 KOs)
- **4** **MIKA IWAKAWA** IBF Japan • 12-6-1 (4 KOs)
- **5** **SUMIRE YAMANAKA** Japan • 7-0-0 (3 KOs)

Some believe Ryan Garcia could have gotten up from the body shot that ended his showdown with Gervonta Davis. He will need to restore their trust on his path to more big fights.

BOXING INSIDERS GIVE THEIR TAKES ON HOW RYAN GARCIA MIGHT REBOUND FROM HIS LOSS TO GERVONTA DAVIS

By Doug Fischer

REBUILDING RYAN

Just when we figured boxing was broken, the industry allowed Gervonta Davis and Ryan Garcia to deliver exactly what the sport needed – a highly anticipated fight with the potential to do big business.

In terms of an event, the showdown between America's most popular young boxers more than delivered. The domestic pay-per-view broadcast generated around 1 million pay-per-view buys while the gate from the packed T-Mobile Arena exceeded $22 million.

It would have seemed like the good-ole days had the fight actually lived up to the hype. Remember when the action and drama created by boxing's biggest fights was so awesome that *both* fighters – winner and loser – were elevated? Sugar Ray Leonard-Thomas Hearns I, Marvin Hagler-Hearns, Evander Holyfield-Riddick Bowe I, Felix Trinidad-Fernando Vargas and Oscar De La Hoya-Vargas are prime examples.

That didn't happen on April 22. We got a winner whose career is obviously on the rise and a loser whose once-bright future could either fall into a tailspin or rise out of limbo, depending on what he does next.

The Ring spoke to four veteran boxing insiders (including the president of Golden Boy Promotions, which represents Garcia) to get an idea of what the social media idol could or should do to rebound from his first pro defeat.

However, before they share their opinions, we should review what happened that night in Las Vegas to understand what Garcia needs to do to rebuild his foundation, confidence and image.

Nobody will call Davis-Garcia a fight-of-the-year candidate, but it was an intense boxing match that produced moments of excitement while it lasted. Garcia raised eyebrows with a brisk opening-round pace and soon gave his fans something to squeal about when his aggression forced Davis to hold for a few seconds in Round 2. However, a relaxed Davis bided his time, as he often does

in the early rounds of his fights, and soon it was his fans' turn to roar when a counter left dumped Garcia to the seat of his trunks.

Davis remained in control until a left to the body ended the fight with Garcia on one knee in Round 7. However, the delayed nature of the knockdown and subsequent stoppage produced mixed emotions that overshadowed the mini-rally Garcia staged with a few right-hand connects in Round 6 and by taking the fight to Davis in Round 7 before getting caught under his ribcage.

During referee Thomas Taylor's 10 count, as Davis fans howled in glory and Garcia's fans sank in their seats, the neutral observers wondered:

"Is he going to stay down? It's over!?! Could he have gotten up?"

It was a bit of a letdown for those hoping to witness something special, but hardcore fans who know how much the industry is struggling didn't complain much. Two young attractions put their undefeated records on the line, sold the hell out of the show and made all involved a lot of money. It doesn't happen enough for us to have a healthy sport.

For the time being, we've got to be satisfied with the coronation of Davis, who proved to be what oddsmakers – as well as the majority of fans, media and boxers – thought he was going into the 136-pound catchweight matchup: the better fighter.

So, where does this leave the "lesser" fighter? Coming into the fight, Garcia was perceived to have the higher upside of the two stars due to his age (24), his tall-and-rangy frame (which looks like it could eventually carry 147 or even 154 pounds) and greater social media following.

But while he didn't embarrass himself vs. Davis, it wasn't the kind of performance that raises the loser's stature. Garcia's technical limitations – chin held high, lack of head and upper-body movement, pulling straight back, overreliance on his left hook – were on full display, and he looked amateurish as he ducked and covered up whenever Davis attacked him in close.

A legion of hardcore fans who were already skeptical of Garcia's dedication to boxing believe he'll never advance beyond what we saw from him vs. Davis. Garcia parting ways with respected trainer Joe Goossen one week after the fight only added to their cynicism.

Some view Garica as a lost cause. Julio Cesar Chavez, who was ringside as a commentator for a Mexican network, accused Garcia of quitting against Davis and told Spanish-language publication Marca that he no longer wants to watch the flashy-but-flawed Californian fight. "Count me out," said the Mexican legend.

However, promoter Lou DiBella says count him in. The recent International Boxing Hall of Fame inductee believes Garcia's future is as bright as ever.

"I'm an unabashedly big fan of the kid," DiBella told The Ring. "If Garcia was a stock, I'd buy. I DM'd him after the fight and told him 'Move forward, get a little more activity. You can come back.'

"He's got ridiculous tools. He got Gervonta's attention in that fight. But he was in over his head and he eventually got caught with a good shot.

"My message to Ryan: Get better. You're young and you're a star. If the pay-per-view numbers are 70 percent of what people say it is, you're huge."

Jolene Mizzone, the former vice president and matchmaker for Main Events, also sees strong potential in Garcia, who she predicted would upset Davis against her better judgment.

"The only reason that the Davis fight happened was because of Ryan Garcia; it took a lot of balls to accept the terms that were given to him," Mizzone said, referring to the catchweight and rehydration clause imposed by Team Davis.

AL BELLO

Davis-Garcia wasn't a great fight, but it was a huge event.

"I was impressed how much Ryan grew outside the ring and how he conducted himself [in the buildup to the fight]. That was one reason why I picked him in the end. But once the fight started, the one thing I noticed was Garcia was alone. I am not here to point a finger at anyone. I just seen a boxer that was alone in there. He looked lost.

"But losses happen. Most of the time it will make you a better boxer inside and outside the ring."

Veteran trainer Rudy Hernandez agrees that a loss can often be the catalyst for vast improvement, but only if the fighter gets right back in the ring and is willing to be properly coached.

"He got stopped, so that's 45 days with no contact, but if he were my fighter, I would want him to come right back to the gym within 30 days of the fight," said Hernandez, who fought professionally during the 1980s and has worked corners for 35 years.

"That's his job. He chose boxing. Boxing did not pick him. He's employed by boxing, so he should come back to work and be in the gym after a month.

"He should be fighting again within three months [of the Davis fight]. I don't see why he can't be back in the ring within three months, four months max, and then take another fight three months after that one. He should have two more fights before the end of the year.

"Unfortunately, boxing today is different from the way it used to be, so it will probably be a few months before he comes back to the gym and starts working out again."

Eric Gomez, the president of Golden Boy Promotions, told The Ring that Garcia does not want to lose any career momentum.

"We've been talking with his manager, Lupe Valencia, and Lupe's told us that Ryan does want to come

back sooner rather than later," Gomez said. "So we have a pending meeting in the next week or so to sit down and just sort of bounce ideas.

"We have our ideas of how we could bring him back, but we want to hear from Ryan himself, see what he's thinking. Depending on who his new trainer is, we'd want to get his ideas as well. We'll want to talk to [the trainer]; we'll want Ryan to train with him a little bit and see where he's at, physically and mentally."

Gomez, who served as Golden Boy's matchmaker for several years before taking more of an executive role with the L.A.-based company, doesn't see why Garcia couldn't come back against a top-level opponent.

"Ryan was in the fight," he said. "It was a good punch [that ended the fight]. He didn't get beat up. He won some rounds. There's nothing to be ashamed of."

Not at all. Davis is one of the top three or four lightweights in the world. However, Garcia announced that he's done with the 135-pound division during the post-fight press conference and now plans to campaign at 140 pounds.

A look at the The Ring's junior welterweight rankings – champion Josh Taylor, two-time titleholder Regis Prograis, IBF beltholder Subriel Matias, crafty stylist Jack Catterall, grizzled veteran Jose Zepeda and unbeaten contenders Arnold Barboza and Gary Antuanne Russell – reveals no weak spots. This is a division of badasses.

DiBella believes Garcia should take his time in coming back, especially before taking on the top 140-pounders.

"There are steps he needs to make between now and the next huge event," said DiBella. "There needs to be some growth between now and something career-defining again. It needs to be a developmental process."

Mizzone, who has moved into fighter management, put on her matchmaker and manager hats when suggesting the level of opposition Garcia could fight in his first comeback bouts.

"I would look to put him in with Jose Pedraza, Yuriokis Gamboa, Jackson Marinez and Anthony Yigit, to name a few," suggested Mizzole.

Garcia had moments vs. Davis before he was stopped ...

AL BELLO

... but there's a lot of room for technical improvement.

"With Pedraza and Gamboa, yes, they may be past their primes, but they are still names in the business. The other thing Ryan will have on his side is most of the top lightweights will move to junior welterweight at some point, so in the meantime he can work on himself, and those guys will be right there. What Ryan needs to remember is that win or lose, he is still a name that plenty of boxers will want to fight."

Gomez agrees that Garcia's fame will make him the target of all levels of fighter – from prospects to champions to future hall of famers – so finding opponents won't be difficult. However, getting him to slow down might be a challenge.

"He's going to decide [the level of opposition]," said Gomez. "We have different levels of opponents – A, B, C – it just depends on what he's feeling. He's got to be comfortable with the plan. If he feels like 'No, I want to keep going, let's challenge the best guys out there,' they're all going to be available for him.

"Normally, [after a loss] you want him to have a confidence-builder, but Ryan is a different type of fighter. He's got his own ideas, so we have to respect that. So, it's all going to come down to us meeting and seeing what he wants to do. Ryan's always shooting for the stars.

"To have such a huge event like [the Davis fight], all that exposure, worldwide interest, he has to get excited for [whatever comes next]. If we put him in with a nobody, he might not get up for it. He could be like 'Why am I going to do that? I may as well spar with tough guys' or whatever. He's going to make the final decision."

That strong sense of agency is something the old-school-minded Hernandez sees as a problem and perhaps the one thing that will keep Garcia from realizing his vast potential as a fighter.

"At the end of the day, he needs a different type of structure than what he's had," said Hernandez, who believes Garcia needs to be with a strong trainer. "He needs somebody who's gonna piss him off by what he has to say. That's what he needs.

"Unfortunately, that's not going to happen. He'll end up quitting if he finds a trainer that's going to talk to him in a manner that he's not used to or tells him to do something that he doesn't want to follow.

"Ryan's a shot-caller. He's the one who runs the show. Unfortunately, you can't be taught if you're running the show. So, what's going to change? I don't know."

Nobody knows. On May 18, Garcia announced that he's joined the star-studded stable of Derrick James – a trainer Mizzone said "could be the teacher that Ryan needs" – via Instagram.

In the coming weeks, this news will be followed by announcements of Garcia's next fight date and first comeback opponent. Only time will tell if his plan is one that gives him any longevity in a sport that desperately needs him.

TOP RANK INC

BATTLE PLAN:
DEVIN HANEY VS. VASILIY LOMACHENKO

VETERAN TRAINERS **KEVIN CUNNINGHAM** AND **ROBERT GARCIA** BREAK DOWN THE MAY 20 CROSSROADS SHOWDOWN FOR LIGHTWEIGHT SUPREMACY

By Joseph Santoliquito

This is a fight that will answer many questions about both Devin Haney, the world's current undisputed lightweight champion, and Vasiliy Lomachenko, who not so long ago was considered the world's No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter.

Lomachenko has fought and won three times since his unanimous decision loss to Teofimo Lopez Jr. in the 2020 Upset of the Year. It's a modest winning streak, but those performances suggested that the Ukrainian's otherworldly talents are still very much alive somewhere within his 35-year-old body.

The 24-year-old Haney will be facing his toughest test on May 20 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, but he has youth and some jaw-dropping skills of his own on his side. Haney unified the Ring, IBF, WBA, WBC and WBO titles when he defeated George Kambosos Jr. (who had taken the championship from Lopez in his first defense) in June 2022, then easily defeated the Australian in a rematch four months later.

There's no question that Lomachenko will not be as easy to hit as Kambosos was. On the other hand, Haney may possess the fastest fists and highest ring IQ Lomachenko has ever faced as a pro.

Is this the fight to prove Haney is a star? Is this the fight to prove Lomachenko is still a pound-for-pound-class lightweight, or that his peak is quickly receding in the rear-view mirror?

The Ring went to two world-renowned trainers for their valued input. First, the highly respected Kevin Cunningham, who is currently working with Adrien Broner and once trained former titlists Cory Spinks, Devon Alexander and Sakio Bika, was asked how he'd handle Haney's preparation for the fight. Robert Garcia, former IBF junior lightweight titlist and two-time Ring Magazine Trainer of the Year, applied his knowledge to a strategy for Lomachenko.

Here are their battle plans:

KEVIN CUNNINGHAM, ON HOW HE WOULD TRAIN DEVIN HANEY:

"This is a huge fight, so I would want Devin to have between an eight-to-10-week training camp. I would like to get in at least seven weeks of sparring, going Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Devin is an undisputed champion who has built muscle memory over time, so I would start him out at eight rounds of sparring the first couple of weeks. The last five weeks it would be 10 rounds, mixed in with a couple of 12-round sparring sessions before the camp ends.

"Monday, Wednesday and Friday, we would do our five-mile runs, and Tuesday we would do our beach drills I like to do in camp in Florida. We would get in 10 60-yard dashes and a good one-mile run after that.

"Thursday would be sprinting drills, starting with a one-mile run and 10 50-yard dashes on the track and exercise out with different calisthenics.

"Devin is very disciplined, so weight will not be a problem. It is one of the things I really like about Devin. You do not hear about him partying in the clubs. We would have Devin around 155 (pounds) the first week, and I would like to have him within 10 pounds two weeks prior to the fight.

"I would have two or three sparring partners, looking for guys who were extremely slick with a high boxing IQ and good footwork. Lomachenko has a high boxing IQ and great footwork. The sparring partners would be around 140 (pounds).

"Fight week, we would want to be within four or five pounds. That way, each day we would do light work to make the weight. I'm a big pads guy – mix that in with some shadowboxing and jump rope.

"We would break down footage together and build a game plan, look for weakness we can expose and look for strengths that we would have to eliminate. After we work the footage down, then we would come up with a game plan.

"Going in, I would want to stress Devin's strengths, not Loma's weaknesses. Loma can do a little of everything. Devin would have to use his natural attributes. We would stress using his height, his length, his reach, his footwork. Devin will need to control the real estate and the distance, keeping Loma away where we can get

THE FIGHTERS

DEVIN HANEY

Record: 29-0 (15 KOs)
Age: 24
Height: 5-foot-8
Reach: 71 inches
Home country: U.S.
Trainer: Bill Haney
Titles held: Ring/IBF/WBA/WBC/WBO
Last fight: UD 12 George Kambosos Jr.

TOP RANK INC

VASILIY LOMACHENKO

Record: 17-2 (11 KOs)
Age: 35
Height: 5-foot-6
Reach: 65½ inches
Home country: Ukraine
Trainer: Anatoly Lomachenko
Titles held: None
Last fight: UD 12 Jamaine Ortiz

to him. Devin will need to keep Loma always resetting. We know in order for Loma to be successful, he's going to have to get close to Devin and get inside Devin's reach. We're going to force Loma to continue to guess and guess and guess, make it hard for him to find out where he needs to be to be effective. That is the chief priority.

"In a fight like this, we would take our time, figure him out, and the onus is going to be on Lomachenko. He's the challenger. He is the one trying to take the title away from Devin. We are not going to give away anything. But we are going to be patient in doing what we would have to do to win rounds. The rhythm and the pace will be dictated by the flow of the fight.

"I would stress to Devin this: Lomachenko got off to a slow start against Teofimo Lopez, and look what happened to him there. He had to fight his way out of an early hole, and he couldn't do it. That tells me Loma will not want to make the same mistake again. That tells me he will come at Devin and try to bank rounds early. We're dealing with a high-IQ opponent who we can't make mistakes against. Loma will look for any opening he sees, and he could capitalize on any mistake Devin could make. We would work a good jab, then open with sharp, short right hands, short uppercuts and left hooks. We would want to step around him when he comes forward and make him reset to get back within his range again.

"Loma is going to be the one working here. He's the smaller guy, he's the shorter guy; he will need to get inside, and we have to make him do that over and over again. Devin has long arms, he has good footwork. He knows how to get in and get out. Loma is a smart guy who knows how to slip and slide and get on the inside, and Devin has to disrupt that.

"In the later rounds, if Devin fights at his range, you don't know what can happen if you hit Loma with the right shot or a shot he doesn't see. That's where knockouts come from, especially with a sharp, defensive fighter like Loma, you're going to have run him into something or trick him into something. If we're winning rounds, and the opportunity presents itself, you take advantage of it. This is going to be an interesting fight. We would be confident."

ROBERT GARCIA, ON HOW HE WOULD TRAIN VASILIY LOMACHENKO:

"Since I know Lomachenko is a very dedicated person and fighter, we would have an eight-week training camp.

"What I like to do with most of my fighters is go five weeks of sparring, and the first couple of weeks, we would start with six and eight rounds. Then we would start picking it up. The last two weeks of sparring, I like to go a hard 12 to 15 rounds. But in those last weeks, we would do that once, maybe twice only, and that would be it.

"I want my fighters to get in condition, and we would spar three days a week. With a fighter over 30, like Lomachenko is, we would spar twice a week. With a veteran fighter over 30, his body is already familiar with the routine and you want to make sure that they are fresh when the time comes to fight for real. I am also very big on rest. The last week, we would not spar. The last week, we're working on resting and getting some little runs in, maybe some shadowboxing here and there.

"With Lomachenko, his body is conditioned; we would not have to worry about making weight. Our biggest priority in the closing weeks, [with] much of the work already done, is rest.

"As for sparring partners, that will not be easy. I would look for three to four sparring partners who were fast, move around and are good boxers. I would want to get guys [who are] 130-, 135-pounders. Loma is already small, so I would not want to get anyone too big. I believe sparring is very important, and conditioning after sparring three times a week. I would leave it up to Loma whether he wants to run in the evenings. I would be OK with little runs to break a sweat. After sparring, I like my fighters on the cycle and jumping rope to get the heart going. I am also a big believer in pad work, so we would work the pads and get the heart going more.

"As for a fight plan, we know Haney is a bigger guy, he is a longer guy, and he's fast. He is going to try and win a decision. He is going to try and box from the outside and keep Loma on the outside with his jab. I would get Loma to fight smarter than he already is. Devin Haney is a big lightweight with speed. Loma is going to need to use his head, and I would want him using his feet, because he has the best footwork.

"The biggest thing I would stress for Loma is [to] fight smarter. I would want him moving and trying to come at Haney and attack using as many angles as he could. We are going to need to be in great shape, which Loma usually is, because we're going to have to constantly move. Loma cannot give Haney a target at all. He will do that by staying low and working the angles. I also would want Loma to go at Haney's body.

"Loma will need to create a fast pace and try and maintain that. Loma cannot use a slow pace at first and give away a few rounds. He already made that mistake against Teofimo Lopez and got himself behind early. It is what led to him losing. Against Haney, he will not make that same mistake again – and that was a big mistake. He needs to start quick in the beginning. We will break down the body early, and by the middle rounds, my advice would be to go harder and keep attacking the body.

"We would need to be patient. We need to stay low, use the angles, use the angles, use the angles and frustrate Haney with the angles. Haney is the bigger, stronger and younger fighter. I know he is the favorite, but I do not think anyone should look past Lomachenko in this fight. He can win this fight. I have always liked Loma's style. I go back to Lomachenko and I want Lomachenko to win. He can win this fight, because he's going to be in great shape. If he stays low, if he keeps coming at Haney at angles and if he frustrates Haney, which he is very capable of doing, Lomachenko has a good chance of winning this fight. He has a great amateur background and has seen every style that there is. Haney's people are going to come into this confident, as they should, but they may be underestimating Lomachenko a little bit. That may be exactly what Lomachenko needs.

"This will be a very difficult fight for Lomachenko. Devin Haney is a great fighter. But I believe Lomachenko's discipline and his style puts him in a great position to win." RING

Joseph Santoliquito is an award-winning sportswriter who has been working for Ring Magazine/RingTV.com since October 1997 and is the president of the Boxing Writers Association of America. Follow him on Twitter @JSantoliquito.

DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK

TEOFIMO LOPEZ IS A FORMER CHAMP AND **JOSH TAYLOR** STILL IS, BUT BOTH WILL BE FIGHTING TO REGAIN THE PUBLIC'S CONFIDENCE ON JUNE 10

By Paul D Gibson

Eighteen months is an eon in boxing. A period of time long enough for a fighter's stock to rise, fall and, if they're lucky, recover again. Long enough too for a fight to not only marinate but be cooked sous vide, stored in the freezer, then reheated at a later date.

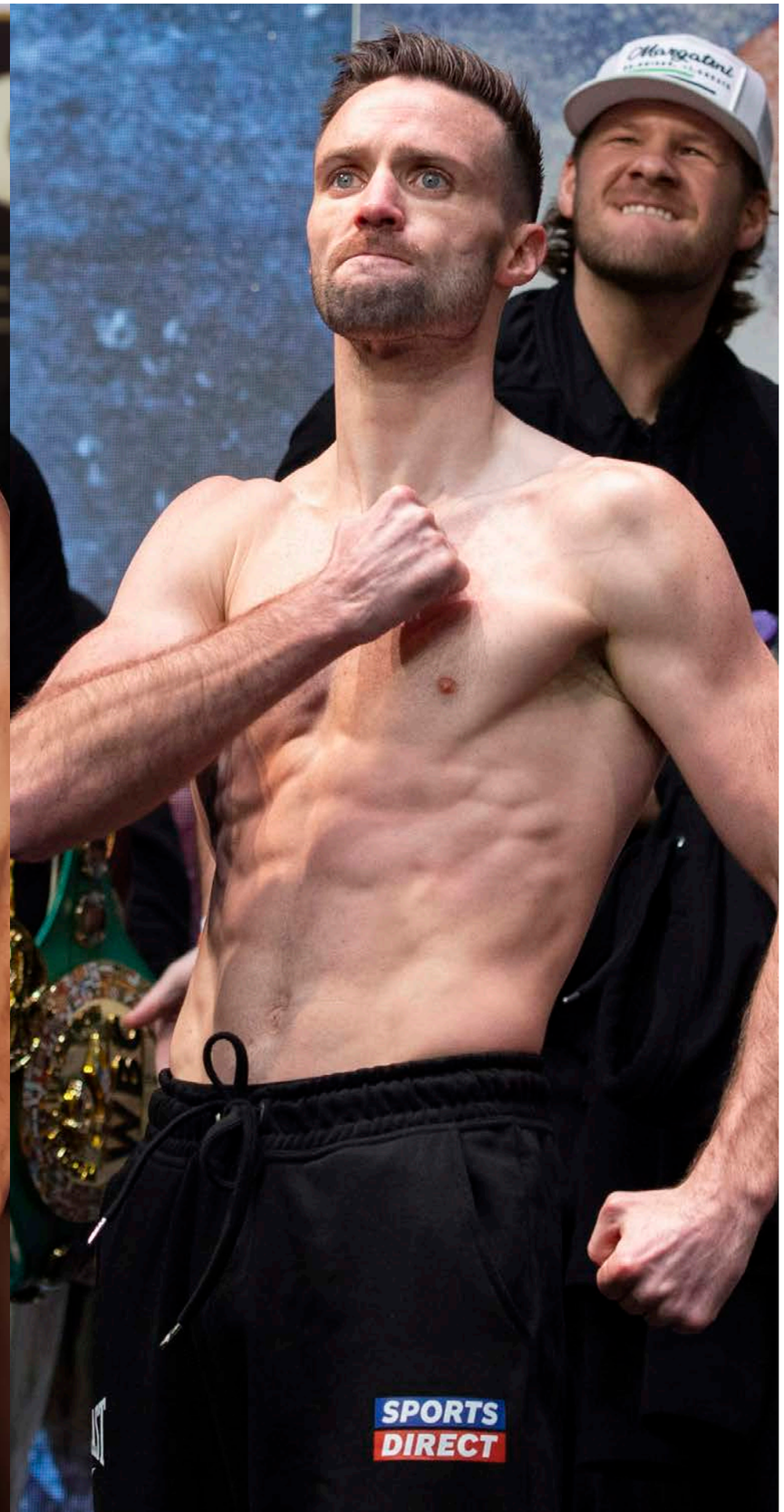
Eighteen months ago, Josh Taylor and Teofimo Lopez were the men. Taylor had defeated elite opposition in Regis Prograis and Jose Ramirez to

confirm his status as the preeminent junior welterweight on the planet. In then-lightweight king Vasiliy Lomachenko, meanwhile, Lopez had beaten one of the best to ever lace a glove. Forget the morass created by the WBC's protectionist franchise gimmick; Loma was the Ring champ and Teo took his green belt along with two other straps. Devin Haney's time and legitimacy would come soon enough.

Had Taylor and Lopez met in the fall of 2021, there would be no caveats to labeling the matchup a bona fide superfight. It would have been talked about as one of the most anticipated matchups of the century thus far. It probably still should be taking place in the big Garden, but back then the organizers would not have gotten away with skimping on costs and burying it in the Theater, as they appear to be doing on June 10.

But it didn't take place back then, and so here we find ourselves, 18 months on. A lot has changed in that passage of time. World titles, unbeaten records and Ring accolades have been whittled away, with Lopez ticking none of those boxes today. And while Taylor remains an undefeated Ring and WBO champion, it is hard to escape the slightly churlish feeling that this is now a fight in which both boxers have something to prove. That it is now a night to reassert greatness rather than cement it.

Taylor, in particular, may feel aggrieved by this view. When the Scot dismantled Ramirez in May 2021, dropping the unified champ twice en route to a more comfortable unanimous decision than the Vegas judges would have you believe, he was riding high in every pound-for-pound list worth looking at. Since then, he's fought once and, according to the record books, won once. But it was a result controversial enough for the British Boxing Board of Control to scapegoat one of their own and downgrade referee Ian John-Lewis for the crime of awarding Taylor one round more than fellow judge Victor Loughlin gave him. Jack



Catterall was always going to be a trickier night than those outside the U.K. suggested, but Taylor underperformed, was fortunate, and has been paying the price in the forum of public opinion ever since.

Lopez has been more active in the same timeframe, but two of his three fights have only served to cast doubt over his status in the game. Soundly beaten by Australia's George Kambosos Jr. and unconvincing in victory over Spain's Sandor Martin, many now question whether his coronation as a modern superstar was a little premature. Did we all jump the gun? Was the Ukrainian's shoulder injury the true kingmaker after all? Teo will quickly call bullshit on any such insinuation, but with humility now apparently for the weak, precious few criticisms are accepted as constructive within the Lopez camp.

None of the above adversely affects the intrigue in this fight, however. Perhaps it even adds to it. Recent ring experiences must surely have chastened both fighters to an extent that any sense of complacency will have been banished from their preparation. Maybe boxing seems easy when you've completed an entire division unscathed. Having received timely reminders that it is anything but, champion and challenger will now enter the ring with a renewed edge that only genuine fear of defeat can sharpen.

There is also some intrigue in how the 140-pound limit will impact the contest. Catterall I, and then the doomed Catterall II, were at one time the only fights Taylor was prepared to hang around junior welterweight for. Has he outgrown the division? Or at least, does it take too much out of him squeezing into it? On the flipside, Lopez is only two fights into his career at this higher weight and some argue he's struggling, now that his physical advantages are not as pronounced. Whether that is confusing cause and effect remains to be seen, however, and certainly size did not appear too much of an

issue as he battered career junior welterweight Pedro Campa last year.

There will be intrigue in the role each fighter plays during the build-up too. Neither are slow to throw verbal jabs to sell a fight, but both now find themselves wavering between fan-favorite and heel. Will one attempt to win over the crowd, or are we loving to hate both sides this time? Taylor has always been the genuine hardman playing a more mainstream role. He can be charming and articulate, but even then, the eyes betray the fact that this is someone very accustomed to violence. The Catterall saga has hurt him, even if much of what has caused the general ire was out of his control. His own desire was unequivocally the rematch to right the various wrongs, but some fights are destined never to be. Particularly if destiny is dictated by a promoter who'd rather hedge their bets than risk losing a key prize.

Lopez, meanwhile, has always trod that precarious line between admirable self-belief and obnoxious arrogance. He got away with it fine as a fresh-faced, back-flipping knockout artist in his early twenties. Less so now with a defeat and three more years added to his resume. He was also unlucky to lose the PR battle when portrayed as greedy and delusional for demanding his market rate. That is a subjective number of dollars, but purse bid evidence shows at least two other promotional entities valued him substantially higher than his own did. More public goodwill dissipated when the WBO inexplicably entered him into their 140-pound rankings at number two despite coming off a loss and having never fought at the weight. A decision so crooked even they were forced to bow to pressure and demote him a month later.

When the bell goes, of course, none of the above matters a damn. And regardless of motivation for tuning in, the hundreds of thousands who do so are unlikely to be disappointed.

Taylor is that rarest of beasts, a consummate technical boxer who can't resist a scrap. Trainers and perfectionists must pull their hair out at how he chooses to win at times. Fight fans, on the other hand, are eternally grateful. He has the height, range and skillset to keep the entire contest with Lopez at a distance that limits risk and personal damage. That such an approach would also limit entertainment is why he almost certainly won't. More than just beat a challenger, this champion seeks to hurt him as well.

That fact is what gives Lopez his hope. He won't need to chase after Josh Taylor. What he will need to do is find a way to convert physical proximity to scoring blows. Throughout his rise to the top, he proved himself to be one of the most dynamic and explosive punchers in the sport with a series of highlight-reel knockouts. And there was plenty of guile and ring intelligence to complement the raw punch power. Stylistically, he was more than capable of adapting fighter by fighter to get the job done. But Taylor is no Mason Menard. He's no Diego Magdaleno. He is not even comparable to Richard Commey, who Teofimo destroyed inside two rounds to win his first world title. Taylor is levels above them all. But then again, so is Teofimo.

Taylor will undoubtedly draw upon the memory of his recently passed hero, Ken Buchanan. Standing alongside Benny Lynch as Scotland's greatest ever, Buchanan was no stranger to Madison Square Garden, having lost his title to Roberto Duran there in nauseating circumstances in 1972. If Team Lopez is looking for omens, however, they should note that Ken was victorious in his four other visits to the venue. Expect tributes to Buchanan and an emotional Taylor on the night. How he channels that emotion is another intriguing element to watch out for. It is all set up for an early-summer classic in New York City.

PAIR OF QUEENS

TWO UNDISPUTED CHAMPIONS, **KATIE TAYLOR** AND **CHANTELLE CAMERON**, DISCUSS THEIR UPCOMING JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT DUEL

By Paul Zanon

"This has the potential to be another 'Fight of the Year' contender. The two styles will make it an exciting war. Undisputed champion versus undisputed champion going head-to-head together. The first time this has ever happened."

As Katie Taylor bids to become a two-weight holder of all the marbles on May 20, Ireland's favorite fighting daughter reflects on how the matchup came to fruition: "I should have originally been fighting Amanda Serrano, and I was obviously very disappointed when the fight fell through (due to an

STEPHEN MCCARTHY

injury suffered by Serrano), because I was working very hard towards it and I think a lot of people were very, very excited for the rematch. Unfortunately, that was out of my hands, so I got on the phone to my manager and my coach and we were on the same page. The only fight that really made sense was to step up a weight and fight Chantelle Cameron. That's a fight which I've wanted for a long time, and I know it's one she's wanted for a long time as well, but it's also a fight that a lot of people believe will be even better than the Amanda Serrano one."

Uncharacteristically, Taylor called out Cameron on Instagram. "I don't use my social media much, but on this occasion it seemed to be the best way to make an impact. This is a fight I obviously wanted, and we had to get her attention quickly and get this fight over the line. Looks like it worked!"

Taylor is no stranger to the 140-pound division, having beaten WBO junior welterweight titleholder Christina Linardatou in November 2019, in between lightweight championship bout against Delfine Persoon. However, outside of that one outing, the 2012 London Olympic gold medalist has spent her whole career at 135 pounds, which begs the question, is weight now an issue? "I could make 135 pounds over the weekend if I wanted to. I have a bit more scope to enjoy my food with this training camp, which lets me focus on the training and boxing side of things. I don't think it's a big deal moving to 140 pounds. I've won a world title in that weight division before and I'm very confident and excited with the challenge, but more so of the possibility of becoming a two-weight undisputed world champion and building a legacy. That would be absolutely huge for me."

As Taylor approaches her 37th birthday, many believe age could be a factor as she takes on the undisputed young gun, five years her junior. She thinks otherwise. "I dismiss age being a factor, and I like when people are doubting me. If you look at some of the best pound-for-pound champions of today, like [Terence] Crawford and [Oleksandr] Usyk, they are probably of a similar age to me. Or even Floyd Mayweather, who went on until he was in his late thirties. I look after my body very, very well and have always lived a very disciplined life. I'm feeling better than ever right now."

Cameron is stronger, has height and reach advantages and a great engine. Ireland's most decorated boxer was quick to dispel any underdog tags. "We're very aware of the challenge. We know what she's coming to do. She's obviously going to try and use her physicality. She's got a good engine, but so have I, and I'm also very strong and don't think I'm an easy person to run over. I completely know what their game plan is going to be, and we're prepared for every angle."

Old foe Natasha Jonas, who pushed Taylor to a close points decision in May 2021, has been sending her former Team GB team-mate tactics and advice ahead of the clash. Taylor replied with a big smile, "Well, she lost three or four times to me already (between amateur and pro bouts), so it's ridiculous that she's trying to give advice to Chantelle when she's lost that many times!"

One opponent both fighters have in common in the pro ranks is Missouri-born two-weight world champion Jessica McCaskill. Taylor reflected on Cameron's victory over "CasKILLA" in November 2022 to become undisputed junior welterweight champion. "She did what she had to do, I guess, and came out as the rightful winner. She won the earlier rounds, but McCaskill won a few of the later rounds. It's always very hard to look good against someone like her, because she's just wild and swings and makes it awkward for the opponent."

With multiple barnburners on her resume for comparison, Taylor explains the magnitude of the Cameron contest. "It could possibly be the biggest challenge of my career. I've had a lot of tough opponents in the past, and I've definitely had the tougher fights and more experience [with] these big occasions. I think that's actually going to be one of the telling factors. In fact, I think that's going to be vital in a fight like this."

Having fought on hallowed stages, both sides of the pond, Taylor reflected on how a fight at the 3Arena in Dublin might compare to Madison Square Garden and London's 02. "This is definitely the biggest fight in my career, and the fact that I have my first fight at home after 22 fights as a professional boxer is huge for me. I keep pinching myself that it's actually happening. There was a time when I thought fighting in Ireland was never going to happen, and I'm so happy that I'll be able to put on a show in front of my home fans. These are the people who have backed me and supported me throughout my amateur and professional careers and followed me all over the world. The support is absolutely phenomenal, and I have a chance to bring big-time boxing back to Ireland for the first time in a long time."

Should Taylor lose in Dublin, she would still retain her undisputed world lightweight status. However, the multi-decorated champion won't entertain any negative thoughts. "I don't think about that or losing at all. Don't underestimate me, because I will prevail on May 20th."

There was a time when both fighters competed at 135 pounds, and despite having her sights firmly set on Taylor, Cameron struggled to break through on the big stage. The Northampton native explained: "I was stuck at lightweight and was mandatory for Katie Taylor, but nothing was happening, so I had to move up for the opportunities. But I feel I've naturally grown into 140 now.

"My whole career has been based around this Katie Taylor fight. Everybody around that division are

doing everything they can to get that fight done, because obviously she's the best at 135 pounds. She's undisputed, and with everything she's done for boxing, people want to put themselves in there and challenge themselves against her. For me, in recent years, I've lost count of how many times in interviews I've been asked, 'Would you fight Katie?' and the answer has always been yes, but I genuinely never thought the fight would happen. So, to now be in a training camp preparing for Katie Taylor, even now, it doesn't feel real."

Cameron recalled the moment social media brought the fight into the public glare. "A couple of months ago, there was talk about me fighting Katie Taylor in September after she boxed Amanda Serrano, but unfortunately Serrano had that injury. Then soon after that was announced, Katie Taylor went on Instagram, called me out and said for all my belts at 140. The moment I saw it, I was rubbing my hands together thinking, 'Great. Bring it on. And you're not making me boil down to lightweight!' Don't get me wrong. If the fight was at lightweight, I would have made the cut because the opportunity would have been too big to pass up. I've got a nutritionist who would have got me down to the weight. If you get a fight like that, you do whatever it takes to make it happen."

While she has the ultimate respect for Taylor, Cameron is fully focused on the job at hand. "Women's boxing wouldn't be where it is if it wasn't for the likes of Katie Taylor and Claressa Shields. They got people talking about women's boxing; they headlined shows and got it on TV. I've got massive respect for her, but let's get one thing straight – that doesn't mean I'm going to get in the ring and not do what I do best. As soon as that bell rings, I don't respect anyone. That all goes out of the window until after the fight. An opponent is an opponent, and over-respecting can mean the difference between winning and losing.

"My team knows how much I've wanted this fight and they know what I can do. Nobody has actually seen the best of me, apart from them. They've seen what I'm capable of, day in, day out in the gym and that's why they're so excited for this one, because they know the best version of me will be in there, come fight night. Katie's got great speed, great footwork and a good boxing IQ, which is a massive skillset, but I know I'm stronger, younger and can also box. However, I've also got the will to win like no other fighter. I'm not there to just take part. I'm there to keep my belts and defeat Katie Taylor."

Taylor has fought 10 times in the last four years, including two bouts against the Belgian Persoon, a tear-up with Jonas and possibly the greatest women's fight of all time against Puerto Rican powerhouse Serrano. Cameron reflected on her opponent's journey and believes now is the time for the passing of the torch. "We've seen some weaknesses and that's what we're working on, but we won't give too much away. She's probably seen flaws in my performances. But those we saw of Katie play to my strengths, and that's why I think I'm all wrong for her. Katie and her coach said about me not having the same experience as her with the big fights and the big nights, but I think that actually also plays into my hands because I have less miles on the clock and I'm five years younger. I'm massively confident of my engine, I've got the gears and I'm making sure my fitness is going to be top notch. This will not be an easy night for Katie Taylor."

Cameron will need to summon all her iron will as she walks into a hostile reception in Dublin to take on Ireland's sweetheart. She remains unfazed. "It doesn't bother me. It should, really, but I'm there to win regardless of where I am, the crowd and the boos. I've got one job to do and I'm tunnel vision to get the result, because at the end of the day it's just me and Katie in the ring. Tune in on May 20th. It's going to be fireworks." RING

RISING INTO PLACE

STRAWWEIGHT CHAMPION **SENIESA ESTRADA** PULLS NO PUNCHES WHEN DISCUSSING HER HARD ROAD TO PROMINENCE IN THIS EXCLUSIVE Q&A

By Thomas Gerbasi

Estrada won the inaugural women's strawweight championship in March 2023.

Diehard boxing fans and pundits always knew Seniesa Estrada had the right stuff to be a star. But it wasn't until March 25 that the rest of the world got in on the secret, as an ESPN-televised, 10-round shutout of Tina Rupprecht not only added the WBC strawweight title to the WBA champ's trophy case, but it earned California's "Superbad" the Ring's inaugural 105-pound championship belt and was the kind of star-making turn that took her to a new level in the eyes of the public. The Ring checked in with Estrada in April to recap her journey thus far and find out what's next for the 105-pound queen.

THE RING: This is a loaded question to start. I felt like the win over Tina Rupprecht was a star-making performance for you, not just because of the way you won, but because everyone was paying attention. There were other big fights going on that night, but I think everyone was waiting to see you in action. Did it feel like, 'Yeah, I kind of got over the hump here'?

SENIESA ESTRADA: I think so. I think this was a fight where a lot of people really saw my skill level and my talent. A lot of people know that my style is different and unique, and my skill level is very high, but I think

JANINE GARCIA

this really just changed the mind of a lot of people. I know my Top Rank debut (W 10 Jazmin Gala Villarino), which was on ESPN+, wasn't seen by as many people as this fight was, and that was my first fight back after a layoff for 11 months and I definitely felt the ring rust in that fight. Even though I won every round easily, I wasn't able to fight the way I wanted to, because my legs didn't allow me to because of the ring rust that I felt.

So going into the training camp for this fight, I trained so hard physically; this time was more mentally tough, just because I knew I wanted to go into this fight showing people all the things that I could do and just be my best. And I'm so hard on myself, I don't even think that was my best performance. I have so much more to show. But now that the ring rust was off and my legs felt amazing and everything felt a hundred percent, I knew I was going to go in there and show a lot of people what I've been wanting to show for a while.

RING: At the level where you're at now, everyone can fight, but I think people need to have a connection. ESPN did a nice feature on you and your dad (Joe Estrada) before the fight, and that really hit home with a lot of people who didn't know your story, and I just got the feeling that people are rooting for you now. They're invested in you now. Do you get that feeling that the bandwagon's filling up?

ESTRADA: I did notice that after this fight, and my trainer (Dean Campos) has always told me, "You're different and people are going to fall in love with you and your story, because a lot of female fighters just don't have the story that you have, and when people see it, they're going to find it very relatable to either you or to your father, or they're going to just find it very inspiring." So I was just really happy that my story was able to be shared leading up to this fight, and I think it's definitely going to help me gain lots of fans and a good fanbase. My goal going into every fight is to put on a great performance so that way people who aren't women's boxing fans can watch me, and hopefully that'll make them become a women's boxing fan because of the way I fight.

But yeah, my story, it's who I am and I'm glad that people were able to relate to it, and the feedback was amazing from everyone who didn't know much about me personally and were able to see that. So yeah, I'm looking forward to more people just getting to know me in that way and sharing my story. And my agent has also been setting up some meetings with some big producers and powerful women in Hollywood to get my life story made into a movie. So I'm really excited about that.

RING: How are you dealing with this? The first time we spoke was in 2016, and it seemed, at that point, you could handle all this. Some people, when they're getting into it and starting to get attention, you could tell they've got the "deer in the headlights" look. But even back then, you had it under control. So am I accurate? Are you handling this?

ESTRADA: I am. I don't feel I have to be a certain way or act a certain way. I'm just myself and everything's just falling into place right now and it's what I've been waiting for. It's what I've been wanting. Even when we first spoke in 2016, the place where I'm at right now in my career at this very moment is what I wanted in 2016, in 2012, in 2005, in 2001 when I first started boxing. So now that it's all coming together and it's actually happening, I'm not surprised. I feel like this is where I'm supposed to be and this is what I was destined to do and it's all just happening right now, so I'm just going to take full advantage of it and I'm going to make sure that every time I step into the ring, I am at my best.

RING: How do you keep your foot on the gas through all of this, though? Because since you were a kid, you've been go, go, go with this. I go back to that first story and I'm reading the names who we were talking about, and they've either fallen off, they're not even in the game anymore or their careers have stalled. Meanwhile, you keep moving up and moving up and doing more things. How difficult is it to keep that focus and keep that momentum going, which is very rare in any sport?

ESTRADA: Oh man, it's been so difficult. I think the only people who really know how difficult it is are my trainer and my father and, of course, my family and close friends. But besides that, it looks easy on the outside, but it's been such a struggle and so difficult to stay motivated and to stay passionate about boxing. It hasn't been easy. There's some days where I would go into the gym and I was really training with no passion because it was unpredictable and nothing to really look forward to. And then the whole 11 months when I was in my dispute with Golden Boy, that was probably the worst 11 months of my life. I was depressed and I was sad, and I did not love boxing. I totally lost all passion and love for it.

I would go into the gym for a few days, and then my trainer wouldn't see me for a couple weeks. Then I would go back in, and I would try and then I would leave and I wouldn't come back for another two, three weeks. I just could not do it. And good thing we are onto bigger and better things. And as soon as I knew that I was going to sign with Top Rank, all of a sudden that love and that passion just shot right back at me, and it's greater than it's ever been. And that's because I know that I'm going to get paid what I deserve and what I want. I'm going to get the exposure and the biggest platform and everything that I've wanted is going to happen now with Top Rank.

And that just brought back all the love and passion that I didn't have.

RING: Everything is obviously going well now, but women's boxing is still the Wild Wild West. So was there a point where you're like, "Man, is this going to get rectified, or am I screwed here?"

ESTRADA: There were a few fights before leading up to this dispute with Golden Boy where I wasn't happy with what I was being paid, and I asked for more and they didn't want to do it. And then I said, "OK, you know what? I want to be a world champion, so I'm going to take this fight, and then maybe the next one I'll get what I want." And they kept promising, promising, and then when it would come to making negotiations for the fight, they didn't want to give me what I wanted. Then I was like, "OK, but I want to fight this champion. I want to have another world title, so I'm going to take the fight." I did it because I wanted to, regardless of not being paid what I wanted. And my trainer told me, "One day you're going to have to say no."

And then that day finally came when I was offered to have my first unification fight, and it was not what I wanted, and nobody had to tell me anything or convince me. And I told my trainer, "I'm not taking it. I'm not fighting." And then they sent another offer for another date, and I said, "No, I'm not taking it. I'm not fighting." And then two months went by, three months went by, four months, six months went by, and I was still refusing to fight. And my trainer told me, "You know what? I'm in this with you. If we're going to be broke for the next 11 months, I'm going to be broke with you if that's how it's going to go." And so that's just the support I had from him. And my dad was great because we're a team. We work so hard, and if I'm not happy, they're not going to be happy. If I'm not happy, my trainer and my dad know that I'm going to go into the gym every day unhappy and with no passion and not really wanting to work hard, because who would want to step into the ring being unhappy with what you're being paid? I did that so much throughout my career and I was tired of it.

And my trainer also told me, "Trust me, you have to believe me when I tell you this. No matter what happens with Golden Boy, you're going to have other opportunities." And he was right. I just had to believe that there were other opportunities out there for me. And in women's boxing, that's rare. You don't have every promoter coming after you and wanting to sign you. That's something few fighters get to experience. And I'm so lucky that I had that.

RING: How much does having all the business stuff taken care of free you, so now you can just focus on winning fights?

ESTRADA: Oh my gosh. I feel like a better fighter every day in the gym, every day in sparring and then now in my fights. It's going to take me to a whole other level physically of how much better I can be, because now I know that all that's in the past and the business side is taken care of so well. I have such a great team, and my lawyer is handling everything for me. And I'm just very happy. And a happy fighter is a dangerous fighter.

And I really noticed how much the business side drains you, because when I went into my Top Rank debut after the whole 11-month layoff, I felt ring rust, but also mentally I wasn't where I'm at right now or where I was in this second fight with Top Rank, because I was so drained emotionally, mentally and then physically from the whole 11-month process. I don't think people understand what I went through in those 11 months. And that drained me so much on the outside, on the inside, just every single aspect. And now I feel the difference, and I feel the change of now not having any emotional drainage in my life or anything sucking the life out of me, business-wise.

RING: I'm going back to 2016 again. This was before all the craziness that's happened the last couple years with Katie Taylor and Amanda Serrano and Claressa Shields and yourself all becoming legit stars. That wasn't happening in 2016. So I asked you whether one woman could do this for the sport or if you needed the dance partner. And at that point everyone was talking about you fighting Kenia Enriquez. That was the big fight. And you said, "No, I think one woman could do it. I don't need that dance partner." Which leads me to 2023. Is Yokasta Valle the dance partner for you? Is that the fight that takes all this to the next level?

ESTRADA: Honestly, I think it'll be a big fight promotional-wise, just because of her now having Golden Boy behind her and me leaving Golden Boy and all that. It'll be a big matchup because of that. But as far as skill-wise, like a big tough fight for me, I don't think that one's it. As far as toughness, I think her style is easier than Tina's. Tina was a very, very difficult fighter, but I made it look easy because I had such a good game plan and my skill level was just totally different. But Tina is a very, very tough, difficult fighter, and I think Valle's style is a lot easier. She doesn't have the technique, doesn't have fast feet, she gets hit with everything, she has no head movement. And to fight me and not have any of that, it's not going to be good for her. But I think it's going to be a big fight, though, just because of, like I said, promotional-wise and her having Golden Boy behind her.

But I think as far as big fights that are going to be a challenge for me or difficult, maybe as I move up to 108 or 112; there's also some good fighters at 108 who hold titles, and then at 112, (Marlen) Esparza has two and The Ring belt. So I think no matter what, a big fight for me would also be the rematch with Esparza (Estrada won a ninth-round technical decision in 2019 after an accidental headbutt caused a deep cut on Esparza's forehead), but I'm not sure how she feels about that anymore. (laughs) That'll definitely be huge, just because of our first fight. So the fans would still want to see the second one.

RING: Seniesa, you are the nicest person in the world, but I've seen some of your responses on Twitter to people that get out of line, and I see you with Esparza and Valle. Do you like this type of stuff?

ESTRADA: I'm not one to…

RING: Wait, wait. You're not one to start but to finish?

ESTRADA: Yeah, exactly. I'm not one to start, but when you keep pushing my buttons and keep talking smack and saying that I'm scared and stuff that's just not true, then that's when I'll have to go after you on Twitter. (laughs)

RING: Seniesa, I'll end it with this. April 2023. Are you happy? Are you like, finally, "I'm good"?

ESTRADA: I'm finally happy. I'm finally where I know I should be. And I'm just happy that I am where I always knew women's boxing would be.

UNDER THE RADAR

TWELVE MORE UNDERGROUND UP-AND-COMERS WHO ARE POISED TO MAKE THEIR MARKS ON THE SPORT

By The Ring Staff

Part one of our Under The Radar series put a spotlight on 11 up-and-comers who are just as talented as the most ballyhooed blue-chip prospect. Our knowledgeable readers may have seen a fight or clips of two or three of the young guns from the group, or perhaps they had read or heard some of their names, but most of the budding boxers were unknown.

That's changed for the most part since the first article was published in the February 2023 issue. Fans are taking notice as eight of the original 11 have either fought – and shined – on notable undercards or have headlined their own shows.

Adam Azim, a member of the first Under The Radar group who has not fought since the article was published, returns to the ring on June 16 against the experienced Aram Faniian (22-1). The 21-year-old junior welterweight will headline a card broadcast live on Sky Sports Main Event and Sky Sports Showcase.

Eric Priest, a UTR prospect who has not fought since the start of 2023, recently signed with Golden Boy Promotions. The 24-year-old middleweight is scheduled to appear on the undercard of the May 27 Alexis Rocha-Anthony Young main event that will stream live on DAZN.

Ashton Sylve, the third UTR alum who hasn't fought since part one, is back in action on May 26. The 19-year-old lightweight, who is signed to Jake Paul's Most Valuable Promotions, will headline a DAZN-streamed developmental series from Orlando, Florida.

Notable performances from the nine who were in action in March and April include:

- Featherweight Bruce Carrington (7-0, 4 KOs), subject of the New Faces in the April 2023 issue, blasted unbeaten (9-0-1) Brandon Chambers in two rounds on the Shakur Stevenson-Shuichiro Yoshino undercard on April 8.

- Welterweight Travon Marshall (8-0, 7 KOs) slugged it out with tough gatekeeper Justin DeLoach en route to a third-round KO victory on the Brandon Figueroa-Mark Magsayo undercard on March 4.

- Junior welterweight Ernesto Mercado (10-0, 10 KOs) overwhelmed former title challenger Henry Lundy in the opening round of his main event in Ontario, California, on April 15.

- Lightweight Floyd Schofield (14-0, 11 KOs) stopped Mexican standout Jesus Valentin Leon in two rounds on the Gervonta Davis-Ryan Garcia undercard on April 22.

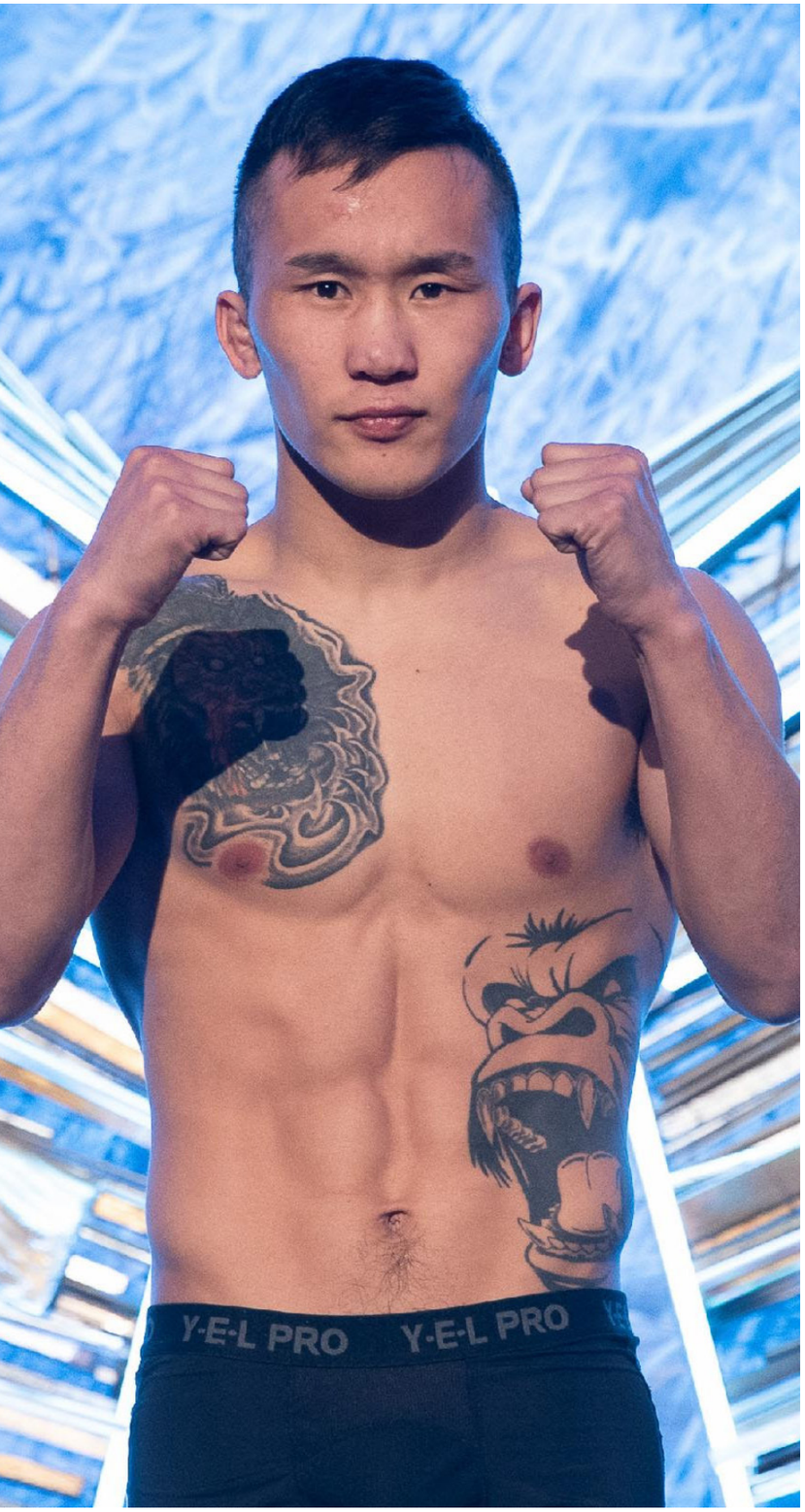
As this issue lands on your screen, 19-year-old lightweight Abdullah Mason, who looked sharp halting Eric Garcia in one round on April 1, will be hours from fighting on the May 20 Devin Haney-Vasiliy Lomachenko undercard.

And coming up:

Callum Walsh (6-0, 5 KOs), who breezed through late-sub Wesley Tucker in two rounds on March 16, returns to headline another UFC Fight Pass show on June 9. The 21-year-old junior middleweight will face veteran gatekeeper Carson Jones (43-15-3).

Omar Trinidad (12-0-1, 9 KOs), who looked strong outworking tough Adan Ochoa to an eight-round decision on April 14, returns to UFC Fight Pass against Roberto Meza (15-3-1) on July 22.

(Top) Junior welterweight Cain Sandoval; (below) featherweight Hayato Tsutsumi.



TSENDBAATAR ERDENEBAT

Age: 26
Home country: Mongolia (resides in Los Angeles)
Weight class: Lightweight
Height: 5-foot-4 (163 cm)
Amateur record: 63-17
Turned pro: 2018
Pro record: 6-0, 3 KOs
Trainer: Manny Robles
Manager: Bulgantamir Enkh-Erdene
Promoter: DiBella Entertainment
Instagram: @tsendy_genghis_khan
Notable Amateur Highlights: 2016 Mongolian Olympian, 2018 Asian Games gold medalist
Next Fight: TBA

What about him excites us?

Erdenebat fought Shakur Stevenson in the quarterfinals of the 2016 Rio Olympics. Now fighting out of Los Angeles, he trains at Knockouts Boxing with respected trainer Manny Robles.

What does he do well in the ring?

The southpaw has quick hands and delivers his punches with maximum velocity and accuracy. He has good footwork and knows how to close the distance and cut off the ring against mobile boxers. Erdenebat also has a high ring IQ.

What does he need to work on?

Erdenebat has many tools, but he often stands square, leaving his head and body exposed. With only 29 professional rounds under his belt, he's still gaining experience. Training with Robles should help Erdenebat put together the pieces to elevate him from a prospect to contender.

Anthony Saldana

ED DILLER-DIBELLA ENT

LINA BAKER-360 PROMOTIONS

UMAR DZAMBEKOV

Age: 25
Home country: Austria (resides in Los Angeles)
Weight class: Light heavyweight
Height: 6-foot-1 (185 cm)
Amateur record: More than 150 bouts
Turned pro: 2021
Pro record: 4-0 (3 KOs)
Trainer: Marvin Somodio
Manager: Steve Feder
Promoter: 360 Promotions
Twitter/Instagram: @UmarDzambekov/@umar_dzambekov
Notable Amateur Highlights: Nine-time national champ (Austria)
Next Fight: June 9 (vs. Dodzi Kemeh on UFC Fight Pass)

What about him excites us?

Intelligence, poise, balance and precision punching blend together in an entertaining package that reminds some veteran observers of a young Dmitry Bivol and Oleksandr Gvozdyk. Dzambekov also has a smart head on his shoulders. He's multilingual (including good English), thoughtful, personable and makes for good interviews.

What does he do well in the ring?

Dzambekov controls distance well and his defense is as solid as his offense. He also keeps his cool under fire and is quickly developing into a better puncher and quality inside fighter.

What does he need to work on?

With only 12 rounds of professional experience, he's obviously still a work-in-progress. He's learning how to properly sit down on his punches and be more comfortable and confident with his body attack. Dzambekov spent most of his third pro bout on his toes, working behind his jab en route to a fourth-round KO of Anthony Fleming. However, he took the initiative and sat in the pocket more during his fourth bout (a third-round stoppage of Nathan Davis Sharp). His style is still more amateur than pro, but he's advancing quickly.

Doug Fischer

JAPHETHLEE LLAMIDO

Age: 23
Home country: U.S. (Norwalk, California)
Weight class: Featherweight
Height: 5-foot-6 (168 cm)
Amateur record: More than 130 bouts
Turned pro: 2020
Pro record: 11-0 (4 KOs)
Trainer: EJ Llamido (father)
Manager: Nomaan Ali
Promoter: Free agent
Twitter/Instagram: @Japhethleee/@Japhethleellamido
Notable Amateur Highlights: 2020 U.S. Olympic Trials participant, 2018 and 2019 Elite Western Qualifier Championships titles, 2015 and 2018 National PAL titles, 2015 National Junior Olympics champ
Next Fight: TBA

What about him excites us?

Llamido possesses eye-catching speed, slickness and ring savvy, plus a deep amateur background. However, it's his world-class sparring – which includes long stints with the Inoue brothers (Naoya and Tomoki) in Japan, as well as camps with Vasiliy Lomachenko and Leo Santa Cruz in California – that has earned his "insider buzz."

What does he do well in the ring?

Llamido, an adept switch-hitter, is best described as a ring general. His main strengths are his patience and ability to control the distance and pace of his bouts regardless of his opponent's style or experience. This ring generalship was on display during his most recent fight, an eight-round decision over former IBF 122-pound titleholder Ryosuke Iwasa on April 15 in South Korea.

What does he need to work on?

As dedicated and precocious as Llamido is, the Filipino-American is still adding professional wrinkles to his game, such as sitting down more on his punches, turning his shots over and a good body attack. He can be overly cautious at times, which sucked the life out of some of his six-round club bouts that went the distance.

Doug Fischer

NAOKI FUKUDA

ATIF OBERLTON

Age: 24
Home country: U.S. (Philadelphia)
Weight class: Light heavyweight
Height: 6-foot-3 (191 cm)
Amateur record: 90-10
Turned pro: 2021
Pro record: 8-0 (6 knockouts)
Trainer: Tom Yankello
Manager: Al Haymon
Promoter: Marshall Kauffman
Instagram: @inatifwetrust
Notable Amateur Highlights: 2020 U.S. Olympic Trials participant, 2018 Elite National Championships title, 2016 and 2018 National Golden Gloves titles, 2018 Eastern Elite Qualifier title, runner-up at the 2016 Youth Open tournament
Next Fight: TBA

What about him excites us?

Oberlton always has a penchant for flair in and out of the ring. He's a fashion designer who makes his own clothes and his own boxing robes. The southpaw has a wealth of amateur experience and is an action fighter willing to take risks.

What does he do well in the ring?

Oberlton works well off the jab and has solid defensive skills and fundamentals, as well as good hand speed. He has great range but is not afraid of mixing it up in the pocket. There is a reason he has six stoppages in his first eight fights. He possesses a sharp, sneaky left uppercut.

What does he need to work on?

His competition level needs to grow. He's wiped out everyone put in front of him (including undefeated fighters in his last two bouts). He also needs to fight more consistently, which may not have anything to do with him. He's had numerous opponents fall out on him. The big question is whether or not his power carries with him as his competition grows.

Joseph Santoliquito

WESTCOTT

DYLAN PRICE

Age: 24
Home country: Philadelphia, PA
Weight class: Bantamweight
Height: 5-foot-5 (165 cm)
Amateur record: 112-12
Turned pro: 2017
Pro record: 16-0 (10 knockouts)
Trainer: David Price (father)
Manager: David Price
Promoter: Price Promotions
Instagram: @dylantherealdylprice
Notable Amateur Highlights: 2013 National Junior Olympics champion (won the Outstanding Boxer Award in that tournament)
Next Fight: TBA

What about him excites us?

He's 24 and ranked No. 11 by the IBF and No. 12 by the WBO at bantamweight. He's very marketable, responsible and has no problem diving straight forward with an all-action style and a seek-and-destroy attitude.

What does he do well in the ring?

Price has a boxer-puncher style mixed with a pressure offense that projects confidence. He is solid fundamentally and has quality hand speed. He likes coming forward but also can fight well moving backward. His left hook is potent, his jab is strong (when he uses it), and he is a strong believer in going to the body. He has a great chin.

What does he need to work on?

Though his jab is good, he needs to use it more consistently. Right now, he's at a stage where he can take his opponent's shots. As he climbs the ladder of contenders, can his ability to withstand his opponent's power shots stay with him? Also, this being boxing, talent does not always rise to the top. It's a political sport, where success can sometimes go unrewarded. Could not being with a major promoter stunt his ability to rise and move the way he should?

Joseph Santoliquito

DARRYL COBB JR

LEO RUIZ

Age: 24
Home country: U.S. (San Bernardino, California)
Weight class: Junior middleweight
Height: 6 feet (183 cm)
Amateur record: 13-1
Turned pro: 2018
Pro record: 12-0 (8 KOs)
Trainer: Robert Garcia
Manager: Robert Garcia
Promoter: Free agent
Instagram: @_leooruiz
Notable Amateur Highlights: Two-time California Desert Showdown champion
Next Fight: July 1 vs. TBA

What about him excites us?

Ruiz is trained and managed by two-time Trainer of the Year Robert Garcia. He spars with Jose Ramirez and other world-class boxers.

What does he do well in the ring?

Ruiz is a tall fighter who knows how to maximize his reach with a shotgun jab. He has good power in his left hand for an orthodox fighter, and he can box on the inside and slug it out if he has to, thanks to his excellent combination punching.

What does he need to work on?

Sometimes Ruiz focuses a little too much on the head shots, neglecting the body. He didn't have an extensive amateur career, so he needs to continue to get in quality rounds of sparring at the Robert Garcia Boxing Academy.

Anthony Saldana

ED MULHOLLAND-MATCHROOM BOXING USA

CAIN SANDOVAL

Age: 20
Home country: U.S. (Sacramento, California)
Weight class: Junior welterweight
Height: 5-foot-8 (173 cm)
Amateur record: More than 100 bouts
Turned pro: 2021
Pro record: 9-0 (9 KOs)
Trainer: Marcus Caballero
Manager: Oscar A Sanchez
Promoter: 360 Promotions
Instagram: @cainnsandoval
Notable Amateur Highlights: 2018 USA Youth National Championships finalist (lost decision to Ernesto Mercado), 2018 USA Western Regional Junior Open title
Next Fight: July 22 (opponent TBA)

What about him excites us?

Sandoval is a heavy-handed pressure fighter hell-bent on breaking down his opposition. His activity – nine bouts in less than two years as a pro – is proof of his love for training, boxing and fighting.

What does he do well in the ring?

Sandoval is very good at closing the distance and dropping fast combinations (which usually include body shots) when in range. In his most recent bout, Sandoval needed only five rounds to stop the more experienced Jose Angulo (14-5), who had gone seven rounds with amateur rival Ernesto Mercado and lasted eight with former world titleholder Alberto Machado.

What does he need to work on?

He needs more head and upper-body movement and more variation in speed as he closes in to do damage. Sandoval also needs to give himself more room to punch at times when he's in close. A little bit of patience would go a long way with his natural fighter instincts.

Doug Fischer

LINA BAKER-360 PROMOTIONS

GETTYIMAGES

DALTON SMITH

Age: 25
Home country: U.K. (Sheffield)
Weight class: Junior welterweight
Height: 5-foot-9½ (176 cm)
Amateur record: 88-10
Turned pro: 2019
Pro record: 14-0 (10 knockouts)
Trainer: Grant Smith
Manager: STN Sports
Promoter: Matchroom Boxing
Twitter/Instagram: @daltonsmith08/@_daltonsmith08
Notable Amateur Highlights: 2014 European Youth champion, 2015 Commonwealth Youth bronze medalist, 2018 ABA champion.
Next Fight: July 1, vs. Sam Maxwell

What about him excites us?

Arguably the best prospect in the U.K., "Thunder" combines above-average power and a smart boxing brain in equal measure.

What does he do well in the ring?

Smith has sound fundamentals developed during a five-years stint with Team GB (Britain's national amateur squad). A well-rounded fighter, Smith won the British title last summer and continues to progress. By the end of the year, the ambitious boxer-puncher should be fighting at European level.

What does he need to work on?

Smith needs to continue developing all aspects of his game as he steps through the levels. He has methodically beaten his marginally talented opposition thus far, but does he have the x-factor to succeed at the highest level in a deep division?

Anson Wainwright

REGIE SUGANOB

Age: 25
Home country: Philippines (Dauis, Bohol)
Weight class: Junior flyweight
Height: 5-foot-5 (165 cm)
Amateur record: Roughly 50 amateur fights
Turned pro: 2018
Pro record: 13-0 (4 knockouts)
Trainer: Edsel Burlas (head coach), Niñolito Janaiz (current trainer)
Manager: Floriezyl Echavez Podot
Promoter: PMI Bohol Boxing Promotions
Notable Amateur Highlights: Three-time Private School Athletic Association (PRISAA) title winner, Philippine National Games (PNG) gold medalist
Next Fight: June 16, vs. Sivenathi Nontshinga for IBF title

What about him excites us?

Suganob is part of a new wave of fighters from the Philippines entering the lower weights. He looked particularly good beating previously compatriot Mark Vicelles (TD 8) in an IBF title eliminator.

What does he do well in the ring?

Suganob has a good boxing brain and boundless energy. He has evolved well, no doubt aided by sparring with the likes of four-weight titleholder Donnie Nietes and three-division king Kosei Tanaka.

What does he need to work on?

He's not a noted puncher but has so far made up for a lack of power with his overall game. So far, he has fought exclusively at home, but he will have to go to South Africa to fight for the title, which will test him as a fighter.

Anson Wainwright

VAN CLAYTON H. RESPONTE

HAYATO TSUTSUMI

Age: 23
Home country: Japan (Chiba)
Weight class: Featherweight
Height: 5-foot-7½ (171 cm)
Amateur record: 88-6
Turned pro: 2022
Pro record: 2-0
Trainer: Shuhei Sasaki
Manager: Yusuke Ninomiya
Promoter: Yusuke Ninomiya
Twitter/Instagram: @hththt2238810/@tsutsumi_hayato
Notable Amateur Highlights: 2016 World Youth champion and 13-time national champion
Next Fight: May 31, vs. Jeo Santisima for vacant OPBF title

What about him excites us?

Tsutsumi has been dubbed the "Next Monster" in Japan – meaning he's expected to follow in the footsteps of former undisputed bantamweight champion Naoya Inoue – which tells you everything you need to know about how highly regarded he is in his homeland. The manner in which he outclassed his vastly more experienced opponents – Jhon Gemino (23-13-1) and Pete Apolinar (16-3) – over the eight-round distance in his first two pro bouts suggests he could be very special.

What does he do well in the ring?

Tsutsumi is blessed with excellent speed and sharp technique – as one would expect from a standout figure in Japanese amateur boxing – a combination expected to take him a long way.

What does he need to work on?

He needs to pick up the nuances and "veteran tactics" of the professional code. Tsutsumi is used to facing Asian opponents and it would aid his pro development if he met a few tough Mexican veterans along the way. It's difficult to determine his punching power due to the high level of opponents he has faced upon turning pro.

Anson Wainwright

NAOKI FUKUDA

AL BELLO

ANDY DOMINGUEZ VELASQUEZ

Age: 25
Home country: Mexico (residing in Las Vegas)
Weight class: Junior flyweight
Height: 5-foot-3 (160 cm)
Amateur record: 59-4
Turned pro: 2020
Pro record: 9-0 (6 KOs)
Trainer: Ismael Salas
Manager: Vishare Mooney
Promoter: Free agent
Instagram: @andydominguezoffical
Notable Amateur Highlights: Three New York Golden Gloves titles
Next Fight: TBA

What about him excites us?

Despite not being signed to a major promotional company, Dominguez fought for a regional WBA flyweight title (Fedecentro) in his seventh pro bout. He works with famed Cuban trainer Ismael Salas and is stablemates and chief sparring partner for four-division titleholder Kazuto Ioka.

What does he do well in the ring?

Dominguez is a come-forward fighter who uses his swift footwork to create his angles as he stalks his opponents. A mixture of speed, power and volume punching makes him a threat at junior flyweight and flyweight.

What does he need to work on?

Patience is the key for Dominguez, who has the quintessential Mexican warrior mentality in the ring. When he learns to time his aggressive attacks and counterpunch, it could save him some unnecessary punishment.

Anthony Saldana

STEPHANIE TRAPP/TGB PROMOTIONS

DEMLER "DJ" ZAMORA III

Age: 20
Home country: U.S. (Las Vegas)
Weight class: Junior lightweight
Height: 5-foot-10 (177 cm)
Amateur record: 104-8
Turned pro: 2019
Pro record: 11-0 (9 knockouts)
Trainer: Demler Zamora (father)
Manager: Bob Santos
Promoter: Premier Boxing Champions (PBC)
Instagram: @djjz3boxing
Notable Amateur Highlights: 2018 USA Junior Open finalist, 2017 and 2018 Monkstown Box Cup (Ireland) champ, 2016 USA Junior Olympics finalist
Next Fight: TBA

What about him excites us?

Zamora first caught the attention of boxing insiders as a child phenom hitting the pads with the late Roger Mayweather. Since then, he's continued to develop, turning professional at 16. There's plenty of sizzle to his boxing style, as evidenced by his famous pad work.

What does he do well in the ring?

His composure under fire belies his tender age. DJ has been developing in the gym since he was a child, sparring with the world-class likes of Robert Guerrero, Alberto Puello, Shakur Stevenson and Hector Garcia.

What does he need to work on?

He recently turned 20, so he's still maturing physically. He just needs to keep working hard as he picks up professional experience. We'll see in due course if he has the steak (physical strength, durability and finer points of boxing) to go with his undoubted talent.

Anson Wainwright

Arturo Gatti attempts to block Micky Ward's signature punch – the left hook to the liver – a shot that almost ended their epic first fight during an unforgettable Round 9.

THREE MINUTES

ARTURO GATTI VS. MICKY WARD I, ROUND 9 (MAY 18, 2002)

by Paul D Gibson

Round 9. If you are going to produce a series of articles based on great rounds from boxing's grand history, this is one you cannot omit. Round 9. The fact that, even with the above headline and photograph removed, boxing aficionados would already know we are talking about the

NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

first Arturo Gatti vs. Micky Ward fight is all the justification needed for such an opening gambit.

The decision has me fencing with a double-edged sword, however. On the one hand, what more can be written about these three minutes? From Eric Raskin's excellent primary source anniversary review to Sergio De La Pava's colorful metaphor-for-life piece, this one round of boxing has received more column inches in the pugilism press than anything since Ali ceased producing movie scripts every time he climbed between the ropes. There is a risk that, more than 20 years on, everything that needs to be said about the men, the fight and the round is already out there.

On the other hand, nonsense. Dead horses get flogged daily on sports pages all over the world, but Gatti-Ward I, Round 9 will never suffer that fate. It lives on as a raging equine beast that the rest of us can only watch as it gallops across wild plains of the rawest human experience and leaves us helpless in a flash flood of contrasting emotions.

These great moments of almost supernatural endeavour become personalized by each individual who views it through their own unique lens. If we were to start a line and, from now till kingdom come, every day a different one of us delivered our thoughts on the 180 seconds Gatti and Ward shared in Connecticut on the 18th of May in 2002, the exercise would never grow stale. What follows is my own tuppence worth.

The beauty of Round 9 is that even standing alone, removed from the context of before and after, it is clearly something very special. An entire movie has been made of Ward's life up to that point, and yet it is not necessary to watch it to appreciate these three minutes. Gatti had been in with Oscar, would later fight Floyd, and he's a Hall of Famer who died in circumstances as tragic as they were suspicious in Brazil at the stupidly early age of 37; but you don't really need to know any of that. That the round equates to little more than three percent of a legendary 90-minute trilogy between the pair does not matter either. HBO's moving documentary, *The Tale of Gatti Ward,* paints a fuller picture and is definitely worth a watch, but Round 9 stripped bare speaks for itself.

Gatti and Ward more than lived up to their proud fighting heritages.

We are often defined by our nationalities, and boxers are no different. And at times the labeling is entirely appropriate. Julio Cesar Chavez is Mexico. Henry Cooper is England. Sugar Ray Leonard is the United States of America. Although there are of course many more layers to those three fighters than a mere country name on a passport, describing them as Mexican, English and American respectively goes some way to encapsulating who they are and what they represent. A little more background is required on the Canadian Gatti and American Ward, however.

Arturo Gatti, as his name suggests, is more olive oil than maple syrup. He was born in the town of Cassino, midway between Naples and Rome. The area is famous for the World War II Battle of Monte Cassino, which saw Allied forces bombard German positions in the area in a series of four bloody assaults that lasted 123 days. A recent academic book on the carnage bears the title *The Hardest Fought Battle of World War II*. Gattis a generation before Arturo would have been familiar with physical and psychological suffering, and an above-average ability to withstand such traumas quickly clearly becomes genetic.

You need to go back another 100 years to understand the true soul of Micky Ward. His ancestors fled famine and British oppression in Ireland in the middle of the 19th century and settled in the Catholic Irish ghettos of Massachusetts. If Lowell was an option for nationality, that's the box Micky would tick. As it was, he fought under the moniker "Irish" and wears a large Celtic cross inked into his left arm. Ward is proud of his country of birth, but his boxing persona is a simple acknowledgement that a different brand of blood courses through his veins. Fighting Irish rebel blood.

The two men were made for each other. Ward was never a boxer but rather a rough, honest, brawling fighter with a heart the size of Fenway Park. Gatti, though no Sugar Ray Robinson, was a better technician and had skills, hand speed, and head and foot movement decent enough to box his way to victories against a certain level of opponent. Until he got tagged, that is. Once you caught Arturo with a clean shot, his pride took over and he went to war with you. Micky never strayed from the front line of any battle, regardless of who was marching towards him. They were warriors and we loved them for it.

When the bell was struck to open Round 9, Ward was already a foot from his corner and moving forward, head bowed, towards his opponent. The bell's timbre, partially swallowed by the noise of a crowd scarcely able to believe the continued intensity of the fight, had barely dissipated when he lunged forward with a reaching left hand lead and allowed his momentum to carry him into another prolonged assault that sent Gatti careening into the ropes and rebounding into the center of the ring. There, in the middle of the mayhem, Ward remembered and, more importantly, adhered to the game plan. Body, head, body.

The culmination of this combination, a chopping left hook into the kidney and liver and whatever other unfortunate organs reside in the lower right torso, froze Gatti where he stood. A second later, his face crumpled into an expression that is a mixture of pain and confusion. It is almost like he is asking Ward: *Why? Why did you do that?* A further second on and he is down on one knee, now devoid of any feeling other than lacerating pain as his battered diaphragm spasms and prevents his lungs from doing their job. Doctors recommend a minimum of 15 minutes rest following even the lightest of solar plexus traumas. Gatti had less than 10 seconds to recover from a perfectly executed Micky Ward signature chopped liver punch.

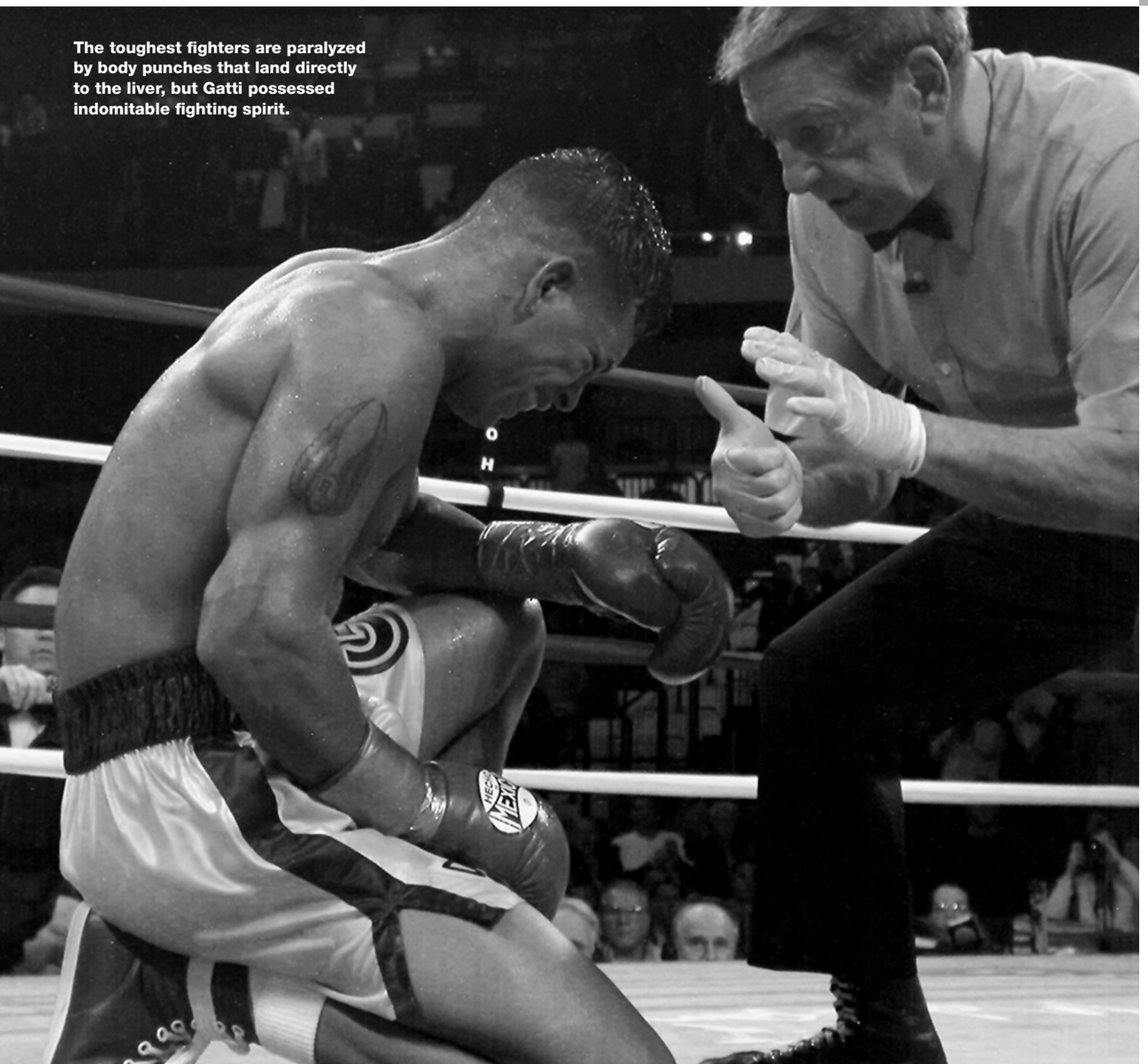
The respite looked cruelly inadequate as referee Frank Cappuccino waved a charging Ward in for the kill. For the next 30 seconds, Gatti was pummeled from pillar to post by a relentless Irish attack. At times, Ward literally ran at his backpedalling adversary in an onslaught that was as frenetic as it was uncouth. There were occasional attempted body shots in there, but too many swings were head-hunters

hoping to turn out Gatti's lights. On review, Micky should have continued with the trusted body, head, body formula, but who cares? Arturo was gone either way. Wasn't he?

Gatti was still dragging his exhausted body from his seat as Ward started forward in anticipation of the bell for Round 9. In fact, if you look closely when the first blow landed, his stool had not yet made it through the ropes to the sanctuary of its ringside position. Round 8 had been hard on Arturo, and commentators were already voicing doubts on whether he could continue. Within 15 seconds, he was down, and the rest of the opening minute was spent in the autopilot survival mode that is hardwired into fighters with real heart. And then we entered the second minute.

Gatti shared his birthplace with the Italian philosopher Antonio Labriola, a thinker famous for his description of Marxism as a philosophy of *praxis*. Praxis is the process by which a theory, lesson or skill is enacted, embodied or realized. It is a Greek term used by Aristotle to describe one of the three activities of man. Whereas the end goals of the other two activities, *theoria* and *poiesis,* are knowledge and production, praxis, much like Arturo "Thunder" Gatti, is all about action. Now was the time for him to put his *Blood and Guts Warrior* spirit into practice.

It was as if the wind that left a temporarily punched-out Ward blew straight into the grateful sails of Gatti and carried him forward throughout an astonishing 60 seconds in which he backed up and dominated Micky. Ward drifted almost listlessly into the ropes towards Gatti's corner and paused, desperately trying to balance an urge to look OK with a need to suck in oxygen every time he peered



The toughest fighters are paralyzed by body punches that land directly to the liver, but Gatti possessed indomitable fighting spirit.

Just when it seemed the fight would be stopped, Gatti raged back.

through his high guard. He beckoned Gatti on with waves of his gloved fists, but the fleeting glimpses of his eyes betray a creeping, incredulous panic. *What the hell is this guy still doing on his feet, never mind pressuring me into a corner*, they say.

Round 9 is perhaps the only in boxing that can genuinely be described as three complete fights in one round. And if rounds 10, 11 and 12 are known as the championship rounds in a title fight, then the final minute of this Round 9 must be the championship seconds. It is at this point that bouts are won or lost and that reputations are made or broken.

With exactly one minute to go, they both clinched for the first time in the round. It is Gatti now that is the more eager for a moment of respite, however brief it may be, and Ward senses it. At the break, they land big punches simultaneously, Gatti a left hook to the body and Ward a sharp right to the jaw. The moment is the pivot on which the round turns again as Micky, blood streaming from a cut around his right eye, goes to work.

Watched in isolation, the final 30 seconds can be difficult viewing. It is, at times, exhibit-A type stuff for boxing abolitionists presenting their case before the moral courts. Gatti is to all intents and purposes gone, but he just won't go down. He doesn't even have the strength to raise his gloves above waist level, let alone high enough to protect his head, and vision out of grossly swollen eyes cannot be more than around 25 percent. As a consequence, he takes a couple of sickening shots that would have been the final nail in the coffin of many a fighter.

But like his soulmate Ward, there was no quit to be found anywhere in Arturo's being. The result of putting two such men together in a ring is axiomatic: Someone else would have to say *no más*. The referee and Gatti's trainer, Buddy McGirt, were surely close, and if the ringside commentator, Jim Lampley, had had a white towel close to hand, I believe he would have tossed it over the ropes on compassionate grounds. As it was, nobody acted, and to this day, despite all I know now, I am still not entirely sure I am happy about that.

Statistics are never a substitute for judgement and I'm not a fan of using them to analyze a boxing match. Nevertheless, one piece of data is particularly striking and helps articulate the brutality of the round. In that short space of time, Ward landed with 60 of the 82 power punches he threw, while Gatti replied with 42 out of 61. Both the quantity and success rates (73 percent and 69 percent) are frightening. Some fighters struggle to land that many throughout the entire course of a 12-rounder and still complain when they lose the decision.

When the bell mercifully tolled, it was hard to believe that it had all only lasted three minutes. They say that time speeds up in great sporting contests so that end appears to arrive quicker than expected. War is different, though: It always feels longer.

Micky's tap on Arturo's shoulder as they part for their corners still gets me every time I watch it. There would later be more overt displays of the bond forged between the two men – in their second and third fights they hugged before the final round, for example – but it is that shoulder tap that is most special. For such a nondescript gesture, it contains so much. I can only guess what Micky Ward was feeling, but I would wager that respect, awe, understanding, concern and love were all amongst his emotions.

Despite the 98 years still to go, the great Emanuel Steward christened it "Round of the Century" live on television before the two fighters had even made it onto their stools. Even in the hyperbolic world of boxing, it did not smack of premature bombast at the time and does not do so today. Steward is with Gatti now and, looking down each weekend, I doubt he has seen anything since to change his opinion. It is difficult to imagine ever witnessing another three minutes to rival it.

WORLD BEAT

U.K.

BY ARCHIBALD JAMES

April produced a shock with Joe Joyce losing his unbeaten record and WBO interim heavyweight title at the mighty hands of Zhilei Zhang. This column predicted a brutally competitive affair while it lasted, and I suppose that was half right. Brutal is the word to describe the beating the Chinese put on his English rival from first bell to last. Joyce appeared at a complete loss to defend against the giant southpaw, who landed his backhand at will. Joyce's chin is unworldly solid, but such was the quantity and quality of clean shots he absorbed, his legs couldn't resist a stumble or two every round. By the third, his right eye was swelling shut fast, and his own slow-motion punches were having zero impact on the 20 stone (280 pounds) in front of him.

Joyce is not a stereotypical bully in the ring, but he is used to being the bigger, heavier man who imposes his will from sheer size and relentlessness alone. Not on this night, and with Joyce's eye basically swollen shut by the fifth round, it was only a matter of time. Unlike some other British heavyweights, there is no quit in big Joe, so it would take a corner, ref or doctor to call time on this one. The doc took a look before the start of the sixth session and let him continue, but a second opinion from the same physician a few minutes later was enough for ref Howard Foster to wave it off.

Zhang, robbed by the judges against Filip Hrgovic, is right back in the mix. Joyce, on the other hand, must be questioning his team's decision to take on Zhang when he was already sitting pretty as the WBO mandatory challenger. There are domestic rivalries to pursue in order to get back to the top table, but at thirty-seven he won't want to hang about.

Across the border and into Wales, a raucous International Arena in Cardiff witnessed local hero Joe Cordina reclaim the IBF junior lightweight title he never lost in the ring. The IBF's decision to strip Cordina in pursuit of more sanctioning fees, rather than simply waiting for their new champion's broken hand to heal, had left a chip on the Welshman's shoulder that he carried all through fight week. He channeled that sense of injustice perfectly in the opening stages, dazzling Shavkatdzhon Rakhimov with hand speed and shot variety in the first before dropping him with a lightning left hook in the second.

In fairness to the now-former

Zhilei Zhang started fast and did damage early to upset Joe Joyce by sixth-round stoppage.

JAMES CHANCE/GETTY IMAGES

HUW FAIRCLOUGH/GETTY IMAGES

Joe Cordina reclaimed his title with a win over Shavkatdzhon Rakhimov.

titleholder from Tajikistan, he rose and immediately returned fire with fire, much as he would throughout the entire contest. He is a relentless whirlwind of activity, marching forward for 12 rounds with the energy of a man who once allegedly left a South African hotel room looking like a BALCO storeroom. His style makes every fight he is in competitive, and in the fifth a big right hand had Cordina briefly in trouble. But in truth, the pockets of true success were small for Rakhimov, and Cordina left the majority of exchanges having landed the cleaner shots.

The crowd was in a frenzy in the seventh round as they sensed an opportunity for their man to press for a finish, but the champ was going nowhere, and the smart money was always on a 12-round decision. In scoring it 116-111 in favour of Rakhimov, Alex Levin's card is one that he should be made to sit down and explain. Of course, he never will. His colleagues overruled him, however, so the right man won and Wales has their champion back. Matchroom will look to keep the title in-house, so expect a handy voluntary against recent Rakhimov victim Zelfa Barrett next for Cordina.

In a Cinco de Mayo weekend extravaganza, John Ryder became the latest sacrificial Brit to suffer at the hands of Saul Alvarez. The Mexican put his Ring Magazine super middleweight championship on the line alongside his four world title belts, but there was little risk of a new king being crowned in Guadalajara. An uppercut broke Ryder's nose early on, and when a one-two dropped the "The Gorilla" heavily in the fifth, it looked like the end was near. Ryder proved he is as brave and game as they come in seeing it through to the final bell. His Rocky Balboa-esque disregard for defense while beckoning the champion to bludgeon him further in Round 9 is a particular highlight.

Looking ahead, the remainder of the month of May is stacked with quality fights. The biggest of all takes place across the Irish Sea in Dublin on May 20 as Northampton's undefeated and undisputed junior welterweight champion Chantelle Cameron puts everything on the line against one of the greatest female fighters in history. Katie Taylor, the undefeated and undisputed lightweight champion, was due to rematch Amanda Serrano at 135, but an injury to the Puerto Rican left the champ with few options for her homecoming. Cameron, who has been screaming for the opportunity for years, is seen by many as an even tougher assignment, although she will feel like she is fighting an entire country on the night. It has proved impossible to get a decision against Taylor at the best of times – just ask Delfine Persoon – so the Englishwoman may need a stoppage to retain her belts in the Irish capital.

In typically shambolic fashion, the three major British promoters have then conspired to put on three huge fights at the same time on May 27. The biggest losers of this scheduling fiasco are likely to be Lawrence Okolie and Chris Billam-Smith, who will contest the former's WBO cruiserweight title in the latter's home city of Bournemouth. Despite taking place in a football stadium and on the biggest television platform in Sky Sports, what should be a much-anticipated encounter is at risk of flying under the radar. While partly due to the champion's reputation of smothering the life out of every meaningful fight he has, it is more the timing clash with two terrific featherweight title fights that will deny this all-Brit affair a larger audience.

Mauricio Lara and Leigh Wood entertained us all three months ago in Nottingham, and they are now set to do it again in Manchester. Wood enters the ring first this time, having immediately activated the rematch clause following his seventh-round stoppage defeat in February. It was a fight he was winning until the Mexican's dynamite left hand landed flush, and that's what makes this rerun so intriguing. Discipline will be key, but Wood carries serious power as well, so it remains to be seen whether he can find and maintain the correct balance in his offensive work to regain his WBA featherweight belt. A typically underwhelming Matchroom undercard is notable only for Jack Catterall's comeback from the wilderness 15 months on from his controversial night with Josh Taylor.

Last, but certainly not least, is Michael Conlan's second attempt to win a featherweight world title. Stopped by Leigh Wood at the death in last year's Ring Magazine Fight (and Knockout) of the Year, the Irishman has rebuilt well with impressive triumphs over Miguel Marriaga and Karim Guerfi. But IBF champion Luis Alberto Lopez is a totally different proposition from those two veterans. The Mexican has visited the British Isles twice in the last 18 months, and twice he has flown home to Mexicali victorious. Lopez boasts a ferocious and relentless style, not dissimilar to his compatriot Lara, and Conlan will need all of his immense boxing skills to safely navigate these 12 rounds in Belfast.

Looking briefly ahead to June, Liam Smith and Chris Eubank Jr. are set to go again. Smith stopped Eubank in the fourth round of their first meeting in January of this year in what some viewed as shock. While the nature of the knockout was surprising, most acknowledge Smith to be the superior boxer, and he will seek to prove once again that Eubank is more name and hype than genuine substance. Perhaps that is why, even after activating the rematch clause, Eubank proceeded to do everything possible to secure

an easier night against Conor Benn, who is now banned from sport by UK Anti-Doping. Like Eubank, Benn has long been criticized as more hype generated by a famous surname than bona fide elite boxer, so the matchup is probably inevitable at some stage. But UKAD confirming Benn's suspension and the British Boxing Board declaring they'll refuse permission for any of their license-holders to face the alleged drug cheat has put it on the back burner for now.

Finally, let's quickly clear up the heavyweight scene as it relates to British boxers. Tyson Fury might fight Oleksandr Usyk. Or Zhilei Zhang. Or Deontay Wilder. Or Andy Ruiz. Or Anthony Joshua. Usyk might fight Daniel Dubois. Joshua might fight Wilder. Or Dillian Whyte. Some or all of these fights might take place in Saudi Arabia. Or China. Or the U.K. Or the U.S. Most are pretty pointless unless Fury vs. Usyk happens.

AUSTRALIA

BY ANTHONY COCKS

MOLONEY TWINS ARE HALFWAY TO BEING FELLOW TITLEHOLDERS

For the 32-year-old Moloney twins, Jason and Andrew, fighting for world titles just one week apart is a dream come true.

Bantamweight Jason "Mayhem" Moloney (26-2, 19 KOs) scored a majority decision victory to secure the vacant WBO strap against big-punching Filipino Vincent "Astro Boy" Astrolabio (18-4, 13 KOs) in the main support bout to Zhanibek "Qazak Style" Alimkhanuly vs. Steve Butler in Stockton, California, on May 13.

The Ring's No. 4 contender going into the fight, Astrolabio, 25, was coming off two impressive wins over Nikolai Potapov by sixth-round knockout and a 12-round unanimous decision victory over Guillermo Rigondeaux.

Jason, who broke his right hand in the early going, used his movement and educated jab to befuddle Astrolabio for much of the fight and appeared to be well ahead on the cards at the final bell. Somehow the judges saw it as a close fight, turning in scorecards of 114-114, 115-113 and 116-112.

The third time was a charm for Jason, whose only two losses have come in world title contests against Naoya Inoue and Emmanuel Rodriguez.

Speaking to The Ring ahead of the bout, Jason assessed his opponent.

"He's a tough Filipino, he'll be hungry for his first world title shot and he's in pretty good form by the looks of it," said Jason, who is ranked No. 2 at 118 pounds by The Ring. "He had three losses a bit earlier in his career, but he seems to have found himself or perhaps dedicated himself more.

"His form is good now and he's coming off two pretty good wins. He beat Rigondeaux, which on paper I guess wasn't expected, then he has a world title eliminator against Nikolai Potapov, which again was another fight he probably wasn't expected to win. But he's coming off two good wins and has obviously earnt his spot for a world title shot.

"I'm preparing for a hard fight. I don't think world titles ever come easy. But I think with my experience now, the level of opposition I've been in with and the level of opposition I've beaten, I certainly think I have got what it takes to beat Astrolabio.

"I think I'm a level above him, but I've got to go out there and show that and prove that on May 13th. As long as I fight a smart fight and don't walk into anything big, I think I can beat him convincingly."

Junior bantamweight Andrew "Monster" Moloney (25-2, 16 KOs), will be matching his skills against highly regarded Japanese boxer Junto Nakatani (24-0, 18 KOs) for the vacant WBO title on the undercard of the undisputed lightweight championship fight between Devin Haney and Vasiliy Lomachencko in Las Vegas on May 20.

Never let it be said that these boys have been put in soft.

Andrew looks to have the tougher assignment on paper in Nakatani, The Ring's No. 6 contender. The undefeated 25-year-old southpaw has been on a hot streak and in his last outing proved he can box as well as bang when he took a 10-round unanimous decision victory over Francisco Rodriguez Jr. after a string of six knockouts. Listed at over 5-foot-7, he's a tall glass of water for the weight.

"I know there is a lot of hype around Nakatani," said Andrew, The Ring's No. 9 contender. "He has looked very good against the level of opponents that he has fought, but I don't think he has fought anyone of my caliber yet. He can dish it out, but we will out if he can take it when it comes back at him.

"We've known for quite a while now that Nakatani was the likely opponent. He's got a style that I haven't faced too often in my professional career – I fought some quite tall southpaws in my amateur days, but I haven't fought one in a while. I've been able to get some really good sparring in against tall southpaws and I'm starting to feel very comfortable with that.

"This is the opportunity I've been waiting on for quite a while now, especially just a week after Jason fights. I'm not going to let anything get in my way to prevent that from happening."

Both of the twins see fighting for world titles a week apart as part of their destiny.

"This has been our dream for a long, long time now," Andrew said. "Since before we turned professional, we both wanted to be world champions at the same time. I feel this is how it is meant to be. The stars have aligned and things have fallen into place. We both fight for world titles one week apart – the same world titles, one division apart. I feel like this is our story, how it was meant to be. We have worked extremely hard for this, almost 20 years now, dedicating our whole lives to this sport, and I feel this is what it was all for."

Jason added: "We really have dedicated our lives to this sport, and the goal has always been for both of us to have good reigns as champions as well and to establish ourselves as the kings of the lighter weights and rule those divisions like the Klitschkos did the heavyweights for a decade.

"We always spoke about the dream of fighting for a world title on the same night, but for it to be one week apart might even be better. We have obviously fought on the same night quite a few times in our careers and it can be difficult on the night with all the chaos, and trying to remain focused on yourself while watching your brother fight can be tough. So for us both to have our own individual nights where we can both wrap ourselves into that one fight where the full focus is on me winning the world title and then celebrate with the team before watching Andrew win a world title a week later himself, it's really going to make it even more special.

"On that plane trip coming home with two world titles, it's going to be a very special moment for us. It will be a fairy-tale ending for all the hard work and dedication we have put in over the years."

Fortune favors the brave.

★ ★ ★

TIM TSZYU NOT PREPARED TO WAIT FOR JERMELL CHARLO, READY TO GO AGAIN MID-YEAR

After defeating former titleholder Tony Harrison (29-4-1, 21 KOs) in nine rounds in March, Tim "The Soul Taker" Tszyu (22-0, 16 KOs) has declared he is not prepared to sit on his hands and wait for undisputed junior middleweight champion Jermell Charlo (35-1-1, 19 KOs) to recover from his injuries.

The 28-year-old Sydneysider was scheduled to face Charlo in late January, but when the American injured his hand in December, he quickly scheduled a fight against the only man to defeat the reigning champion in Harrison.

Some thought it was a bridge too far, but the gamble paid off. Tszyu systematically broke down the more experienced American for the late stoppage he was expecting.

Now, with no concrete date set for the 32-year-old Charlo's return, Tszyu is ready to roll the dice again and risk his mandated shot at the champ.

That risk will come against Mexico's Carlos Ocampo (34-2, 22 KOs), whom he will take on at the Gold Coast Convention Centre in Broadbeach, Queensland, on June 18.

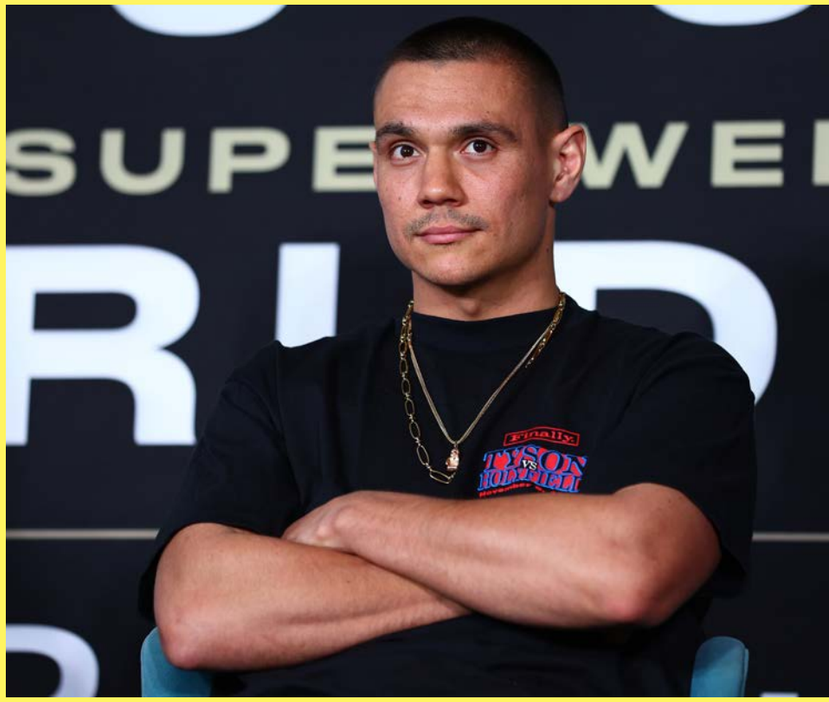
"For me, the main factor is growth. Staying active, getting another style in front of me and being able to adapt to anyone," said The Ring's No. 1 contender to Fox Sports Australia.

"And that's the reason why I'm taking another fight and not waiting. I know it's only going to be more beneficial. Again, as I said before, growth for me has been the number one key. And it's showing."

In an exclusive interview with The Ring before the Ocampo fight was officially announced, Tszyu's manager, Glen Jennings, confirmed they would be ready to go round again sooner rather than later if Charlo's fitness to fight by mid-year isn't confirmed.

"All I can tell you right now is that the WBO has applied the pressure to Charlo and his people to indicate his progress and where he is at," said Jennings, who also managed the career of Tim's famous father, Kostya Tszyu.

"[Charlo is] out of the cast and doing all right. He's still not hitting heavy, so it will take some time for that to come along, but we would still be hopeful we could have him in late July or August, but who knows? But I



Tim Tszyu wants to stay active while awaiting his superfight.

CHRIS HYDE/GETTY IMAGES

would expect it to be August or later.

"If they continue to drag the chain down the line and turn it into a drama, we might have another fight. When you are such a professional athlete as Tim is, we can run our own race through our own promoters (No Limit Boxing).

"Make no mistake; we are not a team of quitters, and Tim is not a fighter to sit around. It's constantly in the back of my mind where the time frame is for that line. And when and if that happens, our promoters will make an announcement."

Tszyu reckons his performance against Harrison might have convinced Charlo he needs a longer time to prepare.

"The bloke hasn't fought in 12 months. How long can you keep postponing a fight?" Tszyu continued in his interview with Fox Sports Australia.

"I think he understands this isn't an easy fight for him. And so he wants to be 120 percent ready. I think before he was taking me lightly. Saying he was going to beat me with one hand. That he was ready to fight with one hand.

"Now he knows, though, so he's taking his time. He will try and postpone it for as long as he can."

The Tszyu-Ocampo fight will feature some tasty bouts on the undercard, including Sam Goodman (14-0, 7 KOs) vs Ra'eese Aleem (20-0, 12 KOs) and the return of Liam Wilson (11-2, 7 KOs) against Eduardo Ramirez (27-3-3, 12 KOs).

★★★

FLOYD MASSON AND FABIO TURCHI GO TO WAR IN BRISBANE

Cruiserweight prospect Floyd Masson (13-0, 7 KOs) engaged in one of the more memorable throwdowns on these shores in recent years.

The 31-year-old Australia-based Kiwi southpaw outpointed Italian lefty Fabio Turchi (21-3, 15 KOs) over 12 brutal rounds in Brisbane on the first of April. Masson won by scores of 117-110 and 115-112 twice, but he took his lumps in the process.

"Words can't describe how I feel," Masson said in the post-fight interview. "I have to thank Fabio; he was a warrior. It was a bloody tough fight."

After the bout, both men were ferried to the hospital in separate ambulances for precautionary checks.

"I've been a promoter for more than two decades, and I can't recall seeing anything like it," said promoter Angelo Di Carlo of Ace Boxing to Fox Sports Australia.

"They were both pissing blood on Sunday morning, and we've taken every precaution to make sure they are being monitored in hospital."

He added: "I said before the fight I thought [Floyd's] hunger would be the difference, and that's how it turned out. Floyd just refused to go down."

Masson is chasing a shot at Ring champion Jai Opetaia (22-0, 17 KOs), who is due to make a mandatory defense of his IBF strap against Polish veteran Mateusz Masternak (47-5, 31 KOs) in his next bout.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

South African boxing saw the successful comebacks of two 115-pounders, Ricardo Malajika and Landi Ngxeke.

Much was expected from Malajika at the start of his pro career. He had an extensive amateur background representing his country numerous times. The pros are a different game, though, and he suffered his first defeat in his eighth bout against countryman Sabelo Ngebinyana, dropping a split decision. Two fights later, his second defeat, a hard-fought unanimous decision to another local rival, Sikho Nqothole.

After two inconsequential wins, he was matched tough against hard-charging Filipino Adrian Lerasan. Lerasan had stopped his last four opponents on the road, and many thought that he would be too much for the South African.

Instead, Malajika produced a career-best performance. Lerasan never got going. Malajika took control from the start, boxing behind his jab. Then he found a home for his straight right, which his southpaw opponent seemingly had no answer for. As the rounds went by, he started to land his combinations.

The end came in the fifth. Malajika trapped Lerasan in the corner, banging away to the body. He then went back to the center of the ring, landing a left hook off the jab. A big right moments later sent Lerasan to the canvas. He got up, but Malajika was all over him. When a right uppercut twisted his head upwards, Lerasan indicated to the referee that he'd had enough. It was all over at the 2:49 mark.

Now 11-2 with nine knockouts, Malajika may yet fulfill his promise. His promoter, Rodney Berman, plans to bring him back in August against another international opponent, Kevin Luis Munoz.

Next up was Landi Ngxeke. In his previous bout, he suffered his first defeat when Filipino Jayr Raquinel blasted him out in two rounds in front of his home crowd in East London.

It was the kind of defeat that can cripple a fighter psychologically, and yet there he was, once again with the support (and pressure) of his home crowd against yet another southpaw Filipino. This time, the man in the opposite corner was Michael Mendoza.

Ngxeke scored a flash knockdown with his right in the first and covered up when his opponent attacked in the second. When Mendoza launched another attack in the fourth, Ngxeke turned his opponent around and backed him to the ropes with his straight right. He kept using that punch, and a series of rights had Mendoza looking hurt.

He stunned his opponent again in the fifth, and that set the pattern for the fight. Although Mendoza had some success to the body and with his right hook upstairs, every time he did something, the taller Ngxeke got back to his probing jab, pot-shotting with his straight right.

Ngxeke was more consistent if a bit gun-shy, and Mendoza's offense was just too sporadic. There could be no doubt about the winner after 12 rounds. Ngxeke got the victory by scores of 116-111 twice and a third card of 117-111. He is now 10-1-1 with four stoppages.

There is also an exciting junior middleweight, Roarke Knapp, steadily climbing the ladder as a pro. He has shown that he can bounce back from defeat, win a war of attrition and box as well as brawl. He reversed his only defeat against Brandon Thysse, winning a split decision in a Fight of the Year candidate. He followed that by patiently outboxing hard-hitting Mexican gatekeeper Dante Jardon.

In his last fight, Knapp found a way to win against a French veteran in the cagey and awkward Ahmed El Mousaoui. In a display of high-level skills by both fighters, the South African landed the more-telling combinations and romped home a unanimous decision winner.

Now 16-1-1 with 11 knockouts and only 24 years old, Knapp has become a solid draw. Another international opponent for a marginal WBC belt is in the works for August.

In more good news, IBF junior flyweight titleholder Sivenathi Nontshinga will make a mandatory defense of his belt in front of his fans in East London on June 16. It will be the first time since 2016 that South Africa hosts a major sanctioning body world title fight.

Still, it is not time to celebrate just yet. The undefeated 13-0 challenger, Regie Suganob from the Philippines, is coming to win and presents a serious threat to Nontshinga.

The South African shattered local records by winning a world title in only his 11th pro bout after a war against Hector Flores Calixto in Mexico in September 2022. Will he be victorious in his first defense, or will his reign be short-lived?

★★★

Former Ring junior flyweight champion Hekkie Budler stayed busy, although not for long, when he dispatched overmatched Thai Wichet Sengprakhon in 43 seconds on May 6. A double left hook, one to the body and another flush on the chin, put an end to the fight. Questioned a week after the fight, the very likable Budler shrugged his shoulders. "I wanted more rounds. We had five opponents pulling out; he was number six. It is what it is."

Budler is the WBC mandatory challenger for current Ring/WBA/WBC champion Kenshiro Teraji. That fight is slated for August or September in Japan. It is a big ask for the 34-year-old Budler, who is now a 39-fight veteran with several wars behind him. Then again, very few people picked him to beat Ryoichi Taguchi and, more recently, Elwin Soto.

Another fighter who is starting to make waves is junior bantamweight Sikho Nqothole, who ran his record to 17-2 when he dismantled another Thai, Boonrueang Phayom, in a single round on the same card as Budler.

He is now on a six-fight winning streak and has scored some very respectable wins. Most notable are decisions over the resurging Ricardo Malajika as well as a win over tough undefeated Filipino Denmark Quibido.

The 115-pound division in South Africa is stacked with talent. It includes Malajika, unbeaten Phumelele Cafu, Landi Ngxeke and Yanga Sigqibo, who gave a respectable performance in Japan, dropping a decision against Kosei Tanaka. It is a refreshing change from some of the heavier divisions where there is very little depth.

Speaking of heavier, former cruiserweight contender Kevin Lerena is back with a bang, winning a unanimous 12-round decision over Ryad Merhy.

It was impressive in the sense that, in his last fight, Lerena suffered his first stoppage defeat to much bigger heavyweight Daniel Dubois. He

MARK KOLBE/GETTY IMAGES

Hekkie Budler's return bout was brief but welcome.

essentially jumped out of the frying pan back into the fire against the Ivory Coast-born Belgian who had 26 knockouts in his 31 victories and only a single defeat.

There were no signs of any ghosts or gun-shyness as Lerena walked through the accurate straight rights of Merhy to land his southpaw left, whether thrown straight, as a hook or the occasional uppercut.

There was excitement in the ninth when Lerena drove Merhy to the ropes, clearly wobbling his opponent, as well as in the final round when Merhy appeared to hurt Lerena with a right. As for the rest of the rounds, Lerena's steady aggression and ring generalship gave him the edge. He forced Merhy to fight off the back foot, which was surprising, since the visitor had the reputation as the puncher in the fight.

In the end, Lerena prevailed by scores of 116-112, 118-110 and a third score of 115-113, which was perhaps the most accurate reflection of the competitive nature of the fight.

The bout was held at a limit of 224 pounds and was an eliminator for the WBC's bridgerweight title (not recognized by The Ring) held by Lukasz Rozanski from Poland.

"We are going to do everything in our power to bring that fight to South Africa. We want to give Kevin the best possible chance to bring the green belt home," said Lerena's promoter, Rodney Berman. "And let me tell you another thing: Rozanski is a brawler. He can handle that style. Lerena will beat him."

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

REASONS TO BE EXCITED ABOUT FILIPINO BOXING IN 2023

They say it's darkest before the dawn, but there was a time last year when Filipino boxing was darker than a brownout in a Philippine summer. When Mark Magsayo lost his WBC featherweight title last July to Rey Vargas, it capped a losing streak that left the Philippines without a world titleholder through the end of the year.

One by one, the post-Pacquiao stalwarts of the country's boxing tradition fell. First it was Jerwin Ancajas, who suffered the first of back-to-back losses to Fernando Martinez in February of 2022 to drop the IBF junior bantamweight title, which he had held since 2016. Then the unpredictable John Riel Casimero lost his belt, stripped last May for failing to defend his WBO bantamweight title against mandatory challenger Paul Butler.

Nonito Donaire, a future Hall of Famer, was the next to fall, having been knocked out in two rounds by Naoya Inoue last June, followed a few weeks later by Rene Mark Cuarto, who was unlucky in a split decision loss to Daniel Valladares and dropped the IBF strawweight title.

How could the country that spawned the great Manny Pacquiao, the record-holder for world titles in most weight classes, not have a single world champion? It was a question that many in the professional scene took seriously, and some answers began to follow.

Now, after a pair of world title wins by two different Filipino fighters, Philippine boxing is back on the upswing. Here are a few reasons to feel good about Filipino boxing going forward.

★★★

MELVIN JERUSALEM IS FINALLY A WORLD CHAMPION

The weight of Filipino boxing rested on the 105-pound shoulders of Jerusalem when he marched into Osaka, Japan, on January 6, 2023, to face Masataka Taniguchi for the WBO strawweight title. Jerusalem, 29, of Manolo Fortich in Bukidnon province, was getting his second shot at a world title, having narrowly fallen short against Chayaphon Moonsri for the WBC strawweight title in 2017 and then losing a shock decision to Filipino journeyman Joey Canoy six months later. After stringing together eight straight wins, including three COVID lockdown wins at the Sanman Gym in General Santos City, Jerusalem entered as a live underdog against Taniguchi, who was making his second defense.

After four uneventful minutes, Jerusalem launched his first attack, stepping to the right and launching a one-two that put Taniguchi down three times – and nearly made him fall a fourth time when referee Roberto Ramirez Jr. looked away to wave the fight off.

"I'm so happy, because I was able to achieve my dream of becoming a world champion," said Jerusalem (20-2, 12 knockouts), who is handled by the Zip-Sanman team, which is comprised of promoter Jim Claude Manangquil of Sanman Promotions and the Japan-based Zip management, which is comprised of Mhavic Kamiyama Nobuyuki Matsuira. Jerusalem is trained by former bantamweight contender Michael Domingo.

Jerusalem will have a tough assignment for his first defense when he meets mandatory challenger Oscar Collazo. A purse bid was held in February, with Golden Boy Promotions winning it with an offer of $152,000 to host the fight on May 27, though no venue has been announced at time of publication.

"Coach Michael and I really prepared for my first defense, and I'm ready for our next match. I'll do everything to defend my belt and get more belts soon," Jerusalem told The Ring.

★★★

MARLON TAPALES IS CHAMPION AGAIN

You could be forgiven for writing off Marlon Tapales after he was stopped in 11 rounds by Ryosuke Iwasa at the end of 2019. That setback, coupled with the pandemic and the overall slow movement of modern professional boxing politics, kept Tapales out of the world title picture for several years as he worked his way back. Even after looking devastating in a second-round knockout of Hiroaki Teshigawara in December of 2021 to earn a shot at the IBF junior featherweight title, he was a heavy underdog when he finally got his shot against IBF/WBA unified titleholder Murodjon Akhmadaliev on April 8 of this year in San Antonio.

JHAY OH OTAMIAS

Marlon Tapales outpointed Murodjon Akmadaliev to win a pair of titles.

Tapales started quickly against the unbeaten Akhmadaliev, landing lead left uppercuts on the fellow southpaw from Uzbekistan, rocking him early on.

Akhmadaliev, who was making his fourth title defense, fought back strongly in the second half of the bout but was unable to overcome his early deficit, losing by scores of 115-113 on two cards – though he did bizarrely win on the third card, 118-110.

It was a stunning second act for the 31-year-old from Lanai del Norte province who first became champion when he knocked out Panya Uthok in 2016 to win the WBO bantamweight title. He was just as anonymous when he lost it the following year due to missing weight before his first defense against Shohei Omori.

"I never lost hope for my career, because I knew I was in good hands. I kept winning and kept in shape, because I knew one day this would happen," said Tapales, who has reinvented himself thanks in part to trainers Ernel Fontanilla and Ting Ariosa, who prepare Tapales out of the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood. The rest of his team includes manager Jim Claude Manangquil and promoters Sean Gibbons of MP Promotions and Shane Shapiro.

Tapales isn't looking for any soft touches in the immediate future. He will be at ringside in Japan to watch when Stephen Fulton defends his WBC/WBO junior featherweight titles against Naoya Inoue on July 25. Tapales hopes to get the next shot at the winner to crown an undisputed champion at 122 pounds.

"[Inoue is] number one, pound-for-pound, so everybody wants to fight him, including me," said Tapales. "I'm a champion now, so I feel I've got a ticket to fight him too, so I can prove that I can be pound-for-pound like him."

Talk about daring to be great.

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PROSPECTS ON THE RISE

As is almost always the case, there is an embarrassment of riches among young Filipino prospects, many of whom can become world titleholders under the right situations. Next up is Regie Suganob (13-0, 4 KOs) of Dauis, Bohol, who will face IBF junior flyweight titleholder Sivenathi Nontshinga on June 16 in East London, South Africa. The 25-year-old Suganob is coming off back-to-back wins over unbeaten fighters Andika D'Golden Boy and Mark Vicelles. Suganob, a classic boxer with good movement, has more power in his hands than his low KO percentage would suggest.

There's also Jade Bornea (18-0, 12 KOs), who will get a chance to avenge Ancajas' two losses to Fernando Martinez when he gets his mandatory title fight on June 24. Bornea, 27, earned his shot when he knocked out Mohammed Obbadi in three rounds in January of 2022, but has been inactive since last August, when he stopped Ivan Meneses.

Beyond that, Charly Suarez (15-0, 9 KOs), Dave Apolinario (18-0, 13 KOs) and Carl Jammes Martin (21-0, 17 KOs) are all up-and-coming boxers who could make a move soon.

ADVICE FROM THE G.O.A.T

Sugar Ray Robinson, the long-retired former face of boxing who was no stranger to comebacks, offers some pointers to then-undefeated Bobby Chacon at the Main Street Gym in Los Angeles in February 1973, three months before the "Schoolboy" suffered his first pro defeat to the legendary Ruben Olivares. Chacon never reached his face-of-boxing potential but bounced back from several setbacks (including a second stoppage to Olivares) during the decade before earning The Ring's 1982 Comeback of the Year award with his epic Fight of the Year victory over rival Rafael Limon. RING

COMING UP

On June 3, middleweight champ Claressa Shields (left) will defend against light heavyweight/heavyweight titleholder Hanna Gabriels.

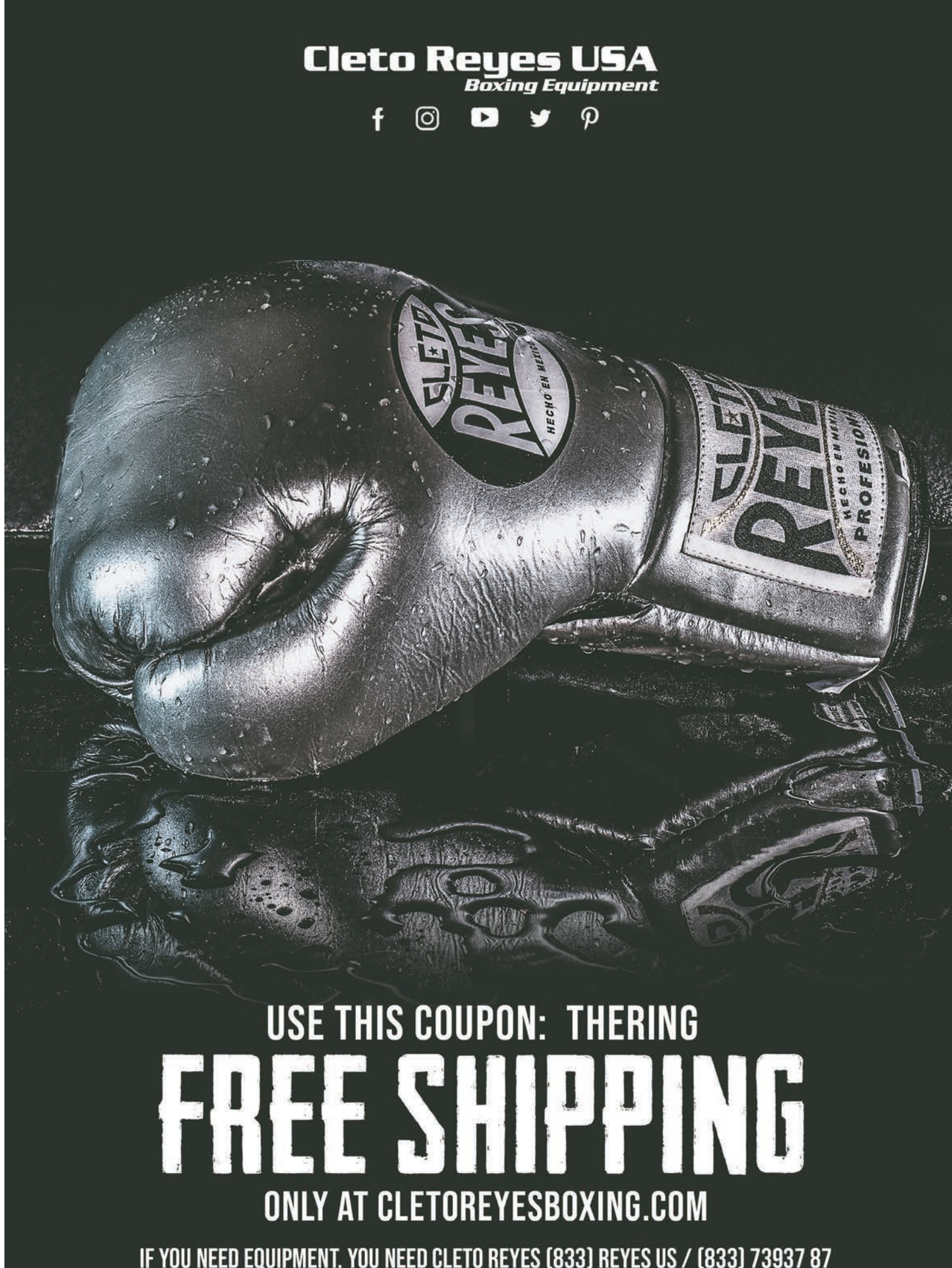
JUNE

JUNE 3 – Claressa Shields vs. Hanna Gabriels, middleweights (for Shields' undisputed championship), Detroit (DAZN).
JUNE 3 – Adrien Broner vs. Bill Hutchinson, welterweights, Miami (PPV).
JUNE 10 – Josh Taylor vs. Teofimo Lopez, junior welterweights (for Taylor's Ring/WBO titles), New York City (ESPN/ESPN+).
JUNE 10 – Jaime Munguia vs. Sergiy Derevyanchenko, middleweights, Ontario, Calif. (DAZN).
JUNE 10 – Sunny Edwards vs. Andres Campos, flyweights (for Edwards' IBF title), London (DAZN).
JUNE 17 – Regis Prograis vs. Liam Paro, junior welterweights (for Prograis' WBC title), New Orleans (DAZN).
JUNE 24 – Joshua Franco vs. Kazuto Ioka, junior bantamweights (for Franco's WBA title), Tokyo.
JUNE 24 – Carlos Adames vs. Julian Williams, middleweights, Minneapolis, Minn. (Showtime).

JULY

JULY 1 – Liam Smith vs. Chris Eubank Jr., middleweights, Manchester, U.K. (Sky Sports Box Office) Also, Franchon Crews-Dezurn vs. Savannah Marshall, super middleweights (for Crews-Dezurn's undisputed championship).
JULY 25 – Stephen Fulton vs. Naoya Inoue, junior featherweights (for Fulton's WBC/WBO titles), Yokohama, Japan (ESPN+).
JULY 29 (unconfirmed at press time) – Errol Spence Jr. vs. Terence Crawford, welterweights (for vacant Ring, Spence's IBF/WBA/WBC and Crawford's WBO titles), Las Vegas. (Showtime PPV).

GREGORY SHAMUS



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